DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 458 393 CE 082 539

AUTHOR	Inman, Patricia L.
TITLE	An Intellectual Biography of Ivan Illich.
PUB DATE	1999-05-00
NOTE	116p.; Doctor of Education Dissertation, Northern Illinois University.
PUB TYPE	Dissertations/Theses - Doctoral Dissertations (041) -- Historical Materials (060)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adult Education; Biographies; *Cognitive Processes; Economic Factors; Educational Environment; Educational History; *Educational Philosophy; Epistemology; Experiential Learning; Friendship; Holistic Approach; *Learning Theories; Metaphors; Nonformal Education; *Self Concept; Social Control; *Spirituality
IDENTIFIERS	*Illich (Ivan)

ABSTRACT

This treatise on Ivan Illich, historian, philosopher, educator, and social critic, has less to do with the details of Illich's life than with his thought over the past three decades. The first section of each chapter (1-3) provides a brief biographical sketch of Illich during the decades 1968-1978, 1978-1988 and 1988-1998 and a discussion regarding the themes of his most well-known works written during each decade. The biographic material provides a context for his thinking, not an explanation of his thought. Chapter 1 identifies dangers of institutionally generated knowledge and qualities of education that Illich feels dilute specialness and imprison us in an economic web of modernized poverty. Chapter 2 discusses Illich's connection of knowledge to the sense of self. Chapter 3 discusses friendship as the necessary context for the discovery of truth in our search for wisdom. Chapter 4 discusses these considerations for adult education (specifically the need for an objective base for learning in a subjective context): providing learning space, vernacular knowledge, embodied experience, defining truth, importance of metaphorical learning, and to beware curriculum. The paper closes in Chapter 5 with the author's personal reflections on friendship as an exchange of gifts, redefining the educated person, relation of self to particular others, reconciling vernacular experience with universal reflection, and defining education. (Contains a 63-item bibliography.) (YLB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 458 393

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

AN INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY OF IVAN ILLICH

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
● Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BY

PATRICIA L. INMAN

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
P. Inman
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

DEKALB, ILLINOIS

MAY 1999

CE 082 539

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ABSTRACT

Name: Patricia L. Inman

Department: Leadership and
Educational Policy Studies

Title: An Intellectual Biography of Ivan Illich

Major: Adult
Continuing Education

Degree: Doctor of Education

Approved by:

J Glenn Smith
Dissertation Director

Date:

12 March 1999

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

Ivan Illich is a historian, philosopher, educator and social critic. Born in Vienna in 1926, he has had a public career as a priest of an Irish-Puerto Rican parish in New York City, vice-rector of the Catholic University of Puerto Rico, and co-founder of the Center for Intercultural Documentation in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Currently Illich splits each year between guest professorships at Pennsylvania State University and the University of Bremen in Bremen, Germany. He spends the remaining months in a Mexican village outside Cuernavaca working on various writing projects.

This treatise has less to do with the details of Illich's life than it has to do with his thought over the past three decades although neither can be separated from another. The dissertation argues that Illich's thought has not changed but deepened from the late sixties to the present. Always reflecting the tradition of thought provided by St. Thomas Aquinas, Illich's discussion of education moved from the dangers of institutionally generated knowledge to how knowledge and technology connect to our self-perceptions. Finally, Illich discusses friendship as the necessary context for the discovery of truth in our search for wisdom. This dissertation documents such an intellectual journey.

This discussion also provides considerations for the structuring of learning opportunities in the field of adult education. These include the provision of learning space, the importance of vernacular or grounded knowledge, the need for embodied experience, the definition of truth, the importance of metaphorical learning, and cautions about curriculum.

Finally, this study provides a personal reflection on topics provided by Illich which are of particular interest to the author. These topics include friendship as an

exchange of gifts, the redefinition of an educated person, the concept of self and particular others, and a commentary regarding possible directions for education.

I conclude that Illich's work has never been placed in a context of Spirit which is essential to understanding his themes. The fact that this has not happened in the past has led to glaring misinterpretations which have provided parallel discourse rather than any dialogue which might be beneficial to the field of education.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

AN INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY OF IVAN ILLICH

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY
PATRICIA L. INMAN

DEKALB, ILLINOIS
MAY 1999

Certification: In accordance with departmental and Graduate School policies, this dissertation is accepted in partial fulfillment of degree requirements.

L. Glenn Smith

Dissertation Director

12 March 1999

Date

ANY USE OF MATERIAL CONTAINED
HEREIN MUST BE DULY ACKNOWLEDGED
THE AUTHOR'S PERMISSION MUST BE OBTAINED
IF ANY PORTION IS TO BE PUBLISHED OR
INCLUDED IN A PUBLICATION.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank Professors Glenn Smith, Sherman Stanage, and John McKnight for their assistance in the preparation of this manuscript. In addition, special thanks to John Niemi, who has provided support and guidance throughout the completion of this doctoral program, and to John Ohliger, who provided for much of the original material as I started my research. Judy Button generously provided technical support. Thank you.

Thanks to Ivan Illich, Lee Hoinacki, and Barbara Duden, who graciously opened their door to an unknown doctoral student. Ivan's inspired writing, Lee's patient guidance, and Barbara's warm hospitality made this study possible.

This investigation was enriched by the opportunity to present these ideas within the forums of the International Society for Educational Biography, the International Standing Committee for the History of Education, and the Midwest History of Education Society.

Finally, heartfelt thanks to my family, who have so patiently waited for this study to end. Unfortunately, the answer to their question, "When will this be over?" can only be answered with, "It has only just begun."

DEDICATION

To Ivan, who taught me to embrace surprise on my journey to knowing

To Lee, who has been my compassionate guide on this pilgrimage

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

PREFACE vii

Chapter

1. THE DANGERS OF INSTITUTIONALLY GENERATED KNOWLEDGE 1

Background 1968-1978 1

Early Life 1

Intellectual Influences 2

Monsignor Illich 7

The Center for Intercultural Documentation 10

Publications 15

Emerging Themes 18

Homo Educandus--Humanity as Needing Education 18

Education as Prison 23

Critics 25

2. UNDERSTANDING: THE KNOWLEDGE CONNECTION 29

Background 1978-1988 29

Emerging Themes 34

Connection of Body to Tools 35

The Danger of Knowledge Disconnected from Natural Context 35

Humility as a Base of Connection 37

The Role of Silence in Connection 37

Chapter Page

The Need for the Development of Knowledge in Integrated Lives 40

Embodied Search for Authentic Self 46

Content-Sensitive Help 60

3. FINDING TRUTH THROUGH FRIENDSHIP 56

Background 1988-1998 56

Emerging Themes 58

Friendship as Austerity 59

Friendship as Guide 61

4. CONSIDERATIONS 68

Providing Learning Space 69

Openness 69

Boundaries 70

Hospitality 72

Vernacular Knowledge 72

Embodied Experience 73

Defining Truth 79

The Importance of Metaphorical Learning 80

Beware Curriculum 82

5. PERSONAL REFLECTIONS 83

Friendship as an Exchange of Gifts 83

Redefining the Educated Person 84

Relation of Self to Particular Others 87

Reconciling Vernacular Experience with Universal Reflectio 88

Defining Education 91

BIBLIOGRAPHY 94

PREFACE

In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, most professors of education in the United States knew the name of Ivan Illich. Today academic educationists, if they recognize the name at all, think of him as a distant relic of "deschooling." Although Illich has published steadily from the late 1960s to the present, recent books have hardly been noticed in academic circles. I read Ivan Illich in one of the first graduate courses I took as part of the doctoral program at Northern Illinois University. Having become concerned about increasing isolation of individuals in society and a decreasing sense of community, I was particularly attracted to his discussion of the medieval commons as a metaphor for those areas of traditional living that are vital to individual and collective well-being. These are the areas that provide for human connection and contact with the natural environment. From his works, I understood that industrialization and the resulting corporate domination had commodified such spaces, making them scarce. I understood that learning was about living as one discovers and develops self in the context of connection and Spirit. And I learned to question ideologies, a process that my education had schooled from me. Over the next several years, I read Illich's extensive publications in an attempt to discover the scope of his work. Originally intrigued with his thoughts, I became increasingly attracted to the vibrant soul that is Illich.

Ivan Illich is a Catholic priest who emerged as an uncomfortably powerful voice not only within the Church but throughout societal discussions in the 1960s. Serving first as a priest in a Puerto Rican parish and later serving as vice-rector of the Catholic

University of Puerto Rico, he became interested in the problems facing Latin American missionaries. Developing a highly anti-imperialistic stance, Illich started the Institute of Intercultural Communications (later emerging as the Center for Intercultural Documentation in Cuernavaca, Mexico) as an intensive language school for missionaries. Concerned that North Americans were diminishing Latin American cultures in their attempt to bring *development* to the many countries they served, Illich tried to dissuade secular and clerical missionaries from going there and alienated some influentials within the Roman Catholic Church's hierarchy by asking everyone to question all institutional ideologies. Moving from the institutional agendas of the Church to the hidden agendas of educational institutions, he became well known for his admonition to eliminate compulsory education. Illich conveyed an orthodox message--that we must allow the diversity of actualized selves to surface rather than succumb to an institutionally managed truth--in unorthodox-sounding rhetoric. His books and speeches became controversial within and outside of the Church.

I spent the next two years reading as many of Illich's works as I could find, which was not always easy. He is much more extensively published in Europe than in the United States. More importantly, I met with Illich in Bremen, Germany, in February 1998. We discussed how his thought had evolved over the course of three decades. Lee Hoinacki, a close friend of Illich's, participated in these conversations and was invaluable in providing direction for this project. Given my background in adult and special education, Illich limited the discourse to the development of his thought regarding the concepts of education and learning. Our discussion centered on seven points that Illich believed were topics that had emerged over the years as a result of changing societal conditions. From the beginning of his work on education, Illich had perceived institutionalized education as limiting. His new conceptions of education found it to be increasingly devastating. These included: (1) the emergence of the concept of humanity as needing education--*homo educandus*; (2) the concept of education as prison; (3) the disembedding of life spheres; (4) the separation of learning and doing; (5) the concept of content-sensitive help programs, technology that prevents us from thinking; (6) the loss of sensory experience in learning, that is, the removal of physical manipulation from the development of technological tools used in learning; and (7) the importance of an ethos of friendship as the basis for learning. Arriving home, I delved further into Ivan's works and looked for the evolution of the seven points we had discussed in Bremen. The more I read and reflected, the more it seemed to me that his thinking has not changed but rather has deepened. After lengthy deliberation, I concluded that the seven points actually fell into three groups of thought: (1) the concept of "humanity as needing education" related to "education as prison" in its discussion of the critical issues in the institutional generation of knowledge; (2) the disembedding of life spheres (particularly the educational sphere), separation of learning and doing, content-sensitive help programs, loss of sensory experience, and the removal of physical manipulation from the development of tools for learning all related to the connection of knowledge to selves and nature; and (3) finally, the importance of an ethos of friendship as the basis for learning as probably the most radical and foundational.

In rereading the early works, as well as the newer pieces that Ivan and Lee Hoinacki had so graciously provided, I realized that the three groups reflected Illich's thinking in a general chronological sense as well. Secondary sources, documents, interviews with acquaintances of Illich, and tapes and transcripts from the Canadian Broadcasting Company supported this observation. The first group of publications, relating to the institutional generation of knowledge, emerged in his earliest thought and dominated through the 1970s. The second, which reflected a need for an understanding of the connection of knowledge to our sense of self and place, represented his thought during the 1980s. The third theme, suggesting that all learning must be guided by friendship, is found in his most current works.

Illich's organic thought that builds upon connection of body and soul, nature and humanity, made organizing this paper challenging. Separation and hierarchical placement make little sense in a discourse of holism. Illich's own writing, although addressing specific issues, incorporated as the central organizer his all-encompassing focus on the relationship between God and humanity. "As you see, I engage philosophy as *ancilla,* not just to avoid blunders on the path to the good life, but to avoid perverting the Gospel."[1]

While Illich's thoughts do "progress" over the years, a common thread emerges throughout. So I have discussed his publications roughly in their order of publication. At the same time, I followed that thought which was most clearly defined in a specific decade. These chapters follow a chronology of time and thought. This organization is supported by the work of Henri Bergson, a well-known French philosopher who mentored Jacques Maritain. Maritain greatly influenced Illich in his reflection on neo-Thomist tradition. Bergson believed that time holds the secret of life. Time is an accumulation of growth, a duration--each moment is something new, unforeseeable. Life is a matter of time and change. Bergson believed that only humanity had the ability for creative evolution through their gift of free choice. Life is a constant unfolding of the mind. This dissertation traces such a journey.

Chapter 1 identifies qualities of education that Illich feels dilute specialness and in fact imprison us in an economic web of modernized poverty. Defined as needy both in an educational and economic sense, we become dependent upon institutional solutions. Imprisoned through stupefying educational systems, we lose our sense of possibility. This theme predominated in the 1970s. Within this discourse, I will also include a discussion of the Center for Intercultural Documentation (CIDOC), Illich's controversial antischool whose unorthodox structure (or rather nonstructure) provided a living model of Illich's thought on learning.

---

[1] Ivan Illich, "Philosophy…Artifacts…Friendship," presentation given to the American Catholic Philosophical Association, Los Angeles, CA, 23 March 1996, 4. Copy provided by Ivan Illich, Bremen, Germany, 16 February 1998.

Chapter 2 discusses Illich's connection of knowledge to the sense of self. As we remove ourselves from natural connections, technographic images provide an artificial sense of self. Humanity as system causes us to view life as fragmented spheres rather than as whole being. Always seeking comfort rather than authentic knowledge, we rely on "content-sensitive help," which assures us that we will never feel the discomfort of dependence on others. This was Illich's dominant theme in the 1980s.

In the course of his lifetime, Illich has come full circle. Although he writes about and lives an ardent life of friendship, its preeminence in serving as a foundation for learning emerged most strongly in the decade of the 1990s. The importance of friendship for Illich lies in the acceptance that the Divine resides in each individual and our respect for each other is a reflection of this. Starting with the simple message of the Gospel--love thy neighbor--Illich journeys through complex issues of the mind, finally returning to the humble message of a pure spirit--be a friend. Chapter 3 discusses this stream of thought.

The first section of each chapter provides a brief biographical sketch of Ivan Illich during that window of time, as well as a discussion regarding the themes of his most well-known works written during that decade. Biographical material provides a context for his thinking rather than an explanation of his thought. Illich was much influenced by the thoughts of St. Thomas Aquinas, who believed "that thought or reason alone cannot know about things and the most important of these aspects and conditions is *existence.*"[2] In other words, we know through sensible experience and through something beyond experience. St. Thomas saw humanity as composed of soul *and* body. Life experience influences understanding.

---

[2] Anton C. Pegis, *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: The Modern Library, 1945), xvii.

Chapter 4 discusses considerations for adult education, specifically the need for an objective base for learning in a subjective context. By this, I refer to the fact that all learning must be based on a search for Spirit which is universal but emerges uniquely in each individual and is shaped by the moving inward intersections of numerous selves in a context of friendship. This flies in the face of our current definition of an educated person--one who defies connection in a search for fragmented knowledge that is always relative.

I close this paper with several personal reflections in Chapter 5, which include Illichian streams of thought that have most affected my life. I do this out of a sense that Spirit resides in each individual but is reflected through human experiences unique to each of us. This is a common thread that permeates most of Illich's work.

There is a part of Illich's story that is of special interest to me. Being Roman Catholic, and often struggling with many of the dictates of the Church, I am interested in the fact that Ivan Illich remains a priest, although he no longer participates in public service. I was interested in how Illich reconciled the Church as institution and Church as nurturer of Spirit. Although he does differentiate between the "she" of the authentic loving Church and the masculine template we see as the institutionalized version, I wondered how he functioned within the framework of such a monolith. Illich states:

> I make a scrupulous distinction between the Church as She and the Church as It. . . . *She* is the mystery, the kingdom among us. The identity of the Church as She will remain through whatever changes She's currently undergoing, which are no greater changes than She underwent under Constantine or in Abelard's time. Those who believe in Her believe in something that cannot be said in words. No pronouncements, however stupid, be they on birth control or on clerical celibacy, can lessen my love for Her and my faith in Her mystery. People who leave the Church because of what She says don't understand love. *It,* however, is the institution, the temporary incarnational form. I can talk about It only in sociological terms. I've never had trouble creating factions and dissent toward the Church as It.[3]

---

[3] Ivan Illich, *Celebration of Awareness: A Call for Institutional Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books), 95.

What I have come to see is that Illich uses the tradition of thought offered by the Church, especially in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, as a lens through which to navigate his pilgrimage of life. This tradition plays such an immense part in Illich's life that I find it difficult to believe that this influence is rarely mentioned in other discussions regarding his work.

This dissertation has one serious limitation. Illich discusses issues of Spirit for which there are no words--the non-commodifiable aspects of life. In a world which always seeks to quantify and commodify, this becomes an impossible discourse. He seeks to promote and discuss those issues of value which have no value in economic terms: "Just as the legendary inquisitor refused to look through Galileo's telescope, so most modern economists refuse to look at an analysis that might displace the conventional centre of their economic system. The new analytical systems would force us to recognize the obvious: that the generation of non-marketable use-values must inevitably occupy the centre of any culture that provides a programme for satisfactory life to a majority of its members."[4]

This paradox, I believe, accounts for Illich's unconventional use of linguistics. What one might consider unorthodox language is Illich's attempt to speak the unspeakable. He uses common words in uncommon ways. "There is only one reality, and you don't get to a certain point and then cross and get into the supernatural realm," is how Lee Hoinacki speaks of this. In a sense, Illich is saying that there aren't two realities, the natural and the supernatural; there is only one reality which encompasses them both. He then writes in such a way that what he says includes both these realities. So it's what I could call a new way of doing theology."[5]

---

[4] Ivan Illich, *The Right to Useful Unemployment* (London and New York: Marion Boyers, 1978), 26.

[5] "Part Moon, Part Traveling Salesman", transcript, *Ideas,* CBC Radio, 1989, 32.

Originally I had tried to make this paper conform to the standard language of dissertations which allows one to envision and quantify elements. To suggest that Illich's thought can be discussed within such a discourse is unreasonable. However, I have attempted to make this paper as understandable as possible by defining terms of Spirit in a language common to reader and subject, by relating the known to the unknown. To that end, I suggest the term *truth* as the reflection of the universal Spirit which resides in and between us all and which we attempt to know but never can. St. Thomas tells us that the ultimate in human knowledge of God is to know that we do not know Him. Reason takes us to a certain point beyond which reason fails. Human knowing accomplished through the senses and reason takes us to the boundary of mystery. "And the more intensely we pursue these ways of knowledge, the more is revealed to us--of the *darkness*, but also the *reality* of mystery."[6] That which is true means first that they are creatively thought by God and, secondly that they can be approached and grasped by human knowledge. We know God through the creative fashioning of things by God which makes it possible for them to be known by men. "Things have their intelligibility, their inner clarity and lucidity, and the power to reveal themselves, because God has creatively thought them. This is why they are essentially intelligible. Their brightness and radiance is infused into things from the creative mind of God, together with our essential being (or rather, as the very essence of their being)."[7]

A short note regarding citations. Most of Illich's writing exists in at least two and often three or more versions. Nearly everything began as an item for an oral presentation, though there are a few items that started as a more extensive project. I had access to most transcripts of addresses, though not all. Most of these became articles, usually with some editorial changes. Illich created a number of his books from items that had appeared earlier as speeches and/or articles. Some editing, usually not extensive, took place at the book stage as well. I have cited, in most instances, whatever published form of a document the reader would most likely be able to find. In all cases, I've tried to indicate where the documents are that I have used. A significant body of what I cite is scheduled to be published by Marion Boyers in the near future. I gratefully acknowledge Ivan's supplying me with a disk containing the papers for this forthcoming publication and thank him for permission to quote from it.

---

[6] Joseph Pieper. *The Silence of St. Thomas: Three Essays* (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1957), 38.
[7] Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas,* 56.

CHAPTER I

THE DANGERS OF INSTITUTIONALLY GENERATED KNOWLEDGE

Our natural knowledge begins from sense. Hence our natural knowledge can go as far as it can be led by sensible things

St. Thomas Aquinas, 1272

Background 1968-1978

Ivan Illich is a historian, theologian, philosopher, educator, and social critic. Within his many roles, he appears to be a man of contradiction. Ordained into the Roman Catholic priesthood, he questions all institutionalized religion. The recipient of numerous graduate degrees from respected educational institutions, he advocates "deschooling of society" as an antidote to "modernized poverty of spirit," which results from endless consumption in the post-industrial world. Having come from a family of wealth, he remains faithful to his vow of poverty and suggests lives of austerity for all.

Early Life

Ivan was born on 4 September 1926 in Vienna, Austria, to Ivan Peter and Ellen (Regenstreif-Ortleib) Illich. His father, a diplomat from an aristocratic family, was a Roman Catholic Croatian. His mother was from a Sephardic Jewish family that originated in Spain before settling near Hiedelberg. His mother delivered Ivan, her eldest, at his father's family home in Vienna in the belief that the medical facilities would be better able to accommodate any complications that might arise during the birth. On 1 December 1926, Ivan was taken to Dalmatia, where he was presented to his father's father and baptized on the day of great liberation.

Ivan grew up spending part of each year in Dalmatia, part with the other grandparent in Vienna, and part at his parents' assigned diplomatic posts. Later, in the 1930s, his ordinary residence was at the house of his grandfather in Vienna,

> where I got stuck as a half-Aryan with diplomatic protection, which being the son of my father afforded--to shelter my Jewish grandfather, until he died a natural death there in his own house in 1941. At that time, I ceased to be a half-Aryan and became a half-Jew, according to the law. We had to more or less go underground and slip out of what was then Germany. I spent the rest of my youth, from the age of fifteen, mainly in Italy, in Florence and Rome. My father was dead by then, and I took care of my mother and two smaller brothers, who are twins. They stayed in Florence. From 1951 on, I have been on this side of the ocean. Since I left the old house on the island in Dalmatia, I have never had a place which I called my home. I have always lived in a tent.[1]

Young Ivan was an honor student at the Piarsten Gymnasium in Vienna from age 10 to 15. Then, in 1941, in accordance with recently imposed anti-Semitic laws, the Nazi occupiers expelled him because of his mother's Jewish heritage. At that point, the Illich family stayed mainly in Italy, both in Florence and Rome.

Intellectual Influences

In Florence, Ivan enrolled in the university where he studied chemistry and developed a method of discerning blood types by their crystallographic formation. He read widely in psychology and the history of European art. In psychology, he was most attracted to Rudolf Steiner and Ludwig Klages.[2]

---

[1] David Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation* (Concord, Ontario: House of Anansi Press Limited, 1992), 80.

[2] Rudolf Steiner, a close friend of Illich's family, developed the concept of Waldorf education. In 1919, Steiner, an Austrian philosopher, scientist and artist, was invited to give a series of lectures to the workers of the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart, Germany. As a result, the factory's owner, Emil Molt, asked Steiner to establish and lead a school for the children of the factory's employees. Steiner agreed to do so on four conditions: the school should be open to all children; it should be coeducational; it should be a unified twelve-year school; and the teachers, those who would be working directly with the children, should take the leading role in the running of the school, with a minimum of interference from governmental or economic concerns. Molt agreed to the conditions and, after a training period for the prospective teachers, die Freie Waldorfschule (the Free Waldorf School) opened 7 September 1919. Schools soon opened in other locations. The curriculum of Waldorf schools still reflect Steiner's philosophy of anthroposophy which emphasizes the nurturing of children's imaginations. Steiner was particularly well-known for his work on Goethe's scientific writings. He later incorporated these investigations into his interest of spiritual development and became a forerunner in the field of spiritual-scientific investigation for the twentieth century.

In 1943, Illich went to Rome and began his studies for the priesthood at the Gregorian University, the Vatican's institution of higher learning. It was here that he met a man who was to become his mentor and friend, the noted French Catholic philosopher, Jacques Maritain who "laid the Thomistic foundations of my entire perceptual mode."[3]

St. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) asserted that all our knowledge, including the spiritual, has its starting point in sensual perception. A Dominican priest, he is considered by the Catholic Church to be one of its most important influences on thought. Particularly influenced by Aristotle, St. Thomas sought to show that reason and logic were completely compatible with Christian knowing. In fact, he believed that the true place of the natural world could only be known by reference to the supernatural. St. Thomas objected to the Aristotelian view that the world was eternal and existed independent of God. Aristotle's "God" was conceived as an abstract natural phenomenon (the Prime Mover) rather than as a personal, spiritual being, as was St. Thomas's.

St. Thomas presented the world as real and knowable, a reflection of God's creativity. God's laws of nature are considered to be based on God's divine law. "Seeing the work of God's law throughout the natural world, Thomas claimed that the whole of metaphysics (concerned with all that exists) is directed toward the knowledge of God. Thomas believed that reason would be led in this direction simply by contemplating the natural world."[4] Humanity is not soul alone but a unity of body and soul. It is not the spiritual soul that is the ultimate bearer of knowledge, but *humanity*--composed of body and soul. "Therefore, our knowledge is, like our being itself, an indissoluble unity of spiritual and corporal (sentient) principles."[5]

St. Thomas's doctrine of truth stems from the belief that everything that can be made the object of human knowledge is either *creatura* or Creator. *Real* things are something thought by the Creator. "To put it more explicitly, they are real because they are thought creatively, that is, they have been fashioned by thought. . . . The fact that things are creatively thought by the Creator--this is exactly what St. Thomas means when he refers to the truth that dwells in everything that is real."[6] Because God creates reality, reality is unfathomable, and being is a mystery--an experience. "Truth cannot be exhausted by any (human) knowledge; it remains therefore always open to new formulation."[7] This assumption results in Aquinas's timeliness. Speculation regarding *truth* is limitless. New realms opened by physics are just as appropriate in our search as is the wisdom of the East.

---

[3] "Part Moon, Part Traveling Salesman," transcript, 3.

[4] Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, *A Short History of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 147.

[5] Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, 30.

Jacques Maritain, following St. Thomas, believed that there are different ways of knowing reality and that rational thought is not complete without spiritual grounding. First, there is the universe of the *mobile being*, or the sphere of nature, which is mutable. Secondly there exists the universe of *quantity*, which constitutes the sphere of mathematics. Finally, there is the universe of being, which constitutes the sphere of *metaphysics*. A formally trained biologist, Maritain believed that scientists are led by their science itself to discover the mysterious world of nature. The universe of concepts emerges from the preconscious life of the spirit on the edge of the unconscious. Maritain believed that the world of sensible and material things is immediately accessible through metaphysical investigations. We must recognize that there are not only different kinds of conceptual knowledge but also different types of nonconceptual or "immediate" forms of knowledge. The basis of metaphysics is intuition, which Maritain defined as intellectual seeing. This intellectual seeing provides our access to the *being* of material things.

"From his earliest years, Maritain was the friend and confidant of numerous artists, writers, poets, and musicians, and he is considered by many as having the finest aesthetic sensibility among the major figures of modern philosophy."[8] Flannery O'Connor, for example, mentioned him repeatedly in a lengthy collection of her letters as an inspiration for her work.[9] Maritain believed art to be a labor of Divine creation. Echoing St. Thomas's emphasis on the importance of the connection to the natural, Maritain believed that human art is doomed to sterility if it cuts itself off from the world of nature and the world of man. Another parallel to St. Thomas involves the beauty of both their spirits. Just as St. Thomas was described as "humble and full of goodness," Maritain was "admired not only for his lifelong zeal for truth and impassioned commitment to freedom but also for his exceptional qualities as a person--his humility, his charity, his fraternal attitude for all that is."[10]

---

[6] Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, 51.
[7] Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, 103.

A more indirect influence on Maritain were the thoughts of Henri Bergson. Bergson (1859-1941), a French Catholic philosopher, had liberated in Maritain "the sense of the absolute." Shortly after Maritain's exposure to Bergson, he and his wife were converted to the Roman Catholic faith. Bergson reacted to the overwhelming materialism of expanding needs that had been fueled by the stimulation of industry in response to the development of the modern sciences--something that he considered a great danger to society. Bergson believed that we are naturally inclined to materialism because we tend to think in terms of space. But time is as fundamental as space, and it was time that Bergson saw as the essence of reality--time being an accumulation of growth, a duration. Because time is an accumulation, the future can never be the same as the past. Each moment is not only new but something unforeseeable. Memory is the vehicle of this duration, and as life grows richer in memory, the field of human choice widens. "Consciousness seems proportionate to the living being's power of choice. . .

---

[8] Joseph W. Evans, "Jacques Maritain," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 5: 160.

[9] Sally Fitzgerald, *Flannery O'Connor: The Habit of Being* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1979).

[10] Joseph Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, 18; Joseph W. Evans, "Jacques Maritain," 164.

. It is the vivid theatre of the imagination, where alternative responses are pictured and tested before the irrevocable choice."[11]

Although choice takes great effort, choice is creation, and it is what sets humanity apart from other life forms. Bergson coined the term "creative evolution" to refer to the choices one makes in the course of a lifetime. Humanity evolves creatively through free choice as opposed to other natural creatures who evolve instinctively. Imagination plays an important role in envisioning possible choices in one's life. The more extensive one's memory of varied experiences and the greater one's imagination, the more far-ranging one's possibilities for living. This emphasis on the importance of change, prominence of creativity, and imagination, as well as the differentiation between materialism and life, emerge repeatedly as themes of Bergson, Maritain, and Illich.

By the time Illich was twenty-four, he had obtained a Ph.D. in history at the University of Salzburg, where he completed a thesis about the problem of historical knowledge in the works of Arnold Toynbee. Toynbee is a representative of what is referred to as "speculative philosophy of history." Toynbee analyzed the rise and decay of various cultures, using inductive methodology to recognize patterns of dissolution. He suggested that one view a civilization as a detached outsider to find patterns of behavior that lead to cultural breakdown or growth. Toynbee believed that in periods of growth, civilizations respond to challenges in creative ways. Institutions and the collectively generated knowledge increase standardization, decrease creativity, and, in fact, encourage mindless acquiescence to unquestioned ideologies. The basis for Illich's early work was the need to view societies from outside themselves as a basis for critiquing institutionally generated knowledge. These themes surfaced repeatedly over all three decades.

Looking back on his education, Illich stated, "Great teachers led me to concentrate on reading programs in areas of their . . . special interest. Their influence had a much deeper mark on my intellectual orientation than formal university study or degree work."[12] It is the reliance on friends as connections to knowledge that has been a hallmark of Illich's life.

---

[11] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1911), 7.

Monsignor Illich

After his ordination in 1951, Illich's superiors in Rome began grooming him for a career in canon law or the Vatican diplomatic service. He evaded the papal bureaucracy by working on a post-doctoral thesis in New York City. On his first evening in the city, he overheard his grandfather's friends making disparaging remarks about the influx of Puerto Ricans. Intrigued, he spent the next two days in a Puerto Rican market beneath the New York Central tracks. Fascination with Puerto Rican culture gave the young priest an entirely new life direction. Illich soon went to Archbishop (later Cardinal) Spellman's office, asking to be posted to a Puerto Rican parish. Spellman assigned him to assist the pastor of Incarnation Church in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan. Formerly a parish dominated by Irish -Americans, Incarnation's ethnic composition was rapidly changing with the migration of Puerto Ricans. The older immigrant populations (Irish, Italians, and Jews) were reacting to the recently arrived Puerto Ricans with the same prejudice that they had themselves experienced.

Illich soon became aware of the problem of integrating Puerto Rican culture into United States-style religion. He observed church policy being formulated based upon the stereotypes of immigrant populations. Clerics interpreted Puerto Ricans' irregular attendance at Sunday mass as indifference to church directives. Actually, this pattern of attendance resulted from the rural nature of Puerto Rico, where families were often far from a parish center. Under these conditions, church attendance became difficult or impossible. The proximity of Puerto Rico, a relatively brief plane ride, made for a transient population. This fact also contributed to sporadic church attendance. Illich saw this as a reflection of culture rather than a lack of faith.

---

[12] "Ivan Illich," *Current Biography* (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1969), 218.

At the same time, Puerto Ricans brought a strong Spanish-Christian tradition. This was a bridge between the hemispheres, both politically and culturally, that was neither considered nor valued. This offering brought a great richness that could have enhanced perspectives and lives.

Illich revolutionized the archdiocese's approach to the Puerto Rican "problem." During his yearly vacations, he walked, hitchhiked, or rode horseback all across Puerto Rico. After one such trip, he wrote,

> The first Mass I said at about six in the morning, after I had slept on the alter steps of the chapel. Then I traveled on, by horseback, to the next chapel. I heard confessions, baptized, married, and off I went to the third chapel, still on horseback, where I arrived after noon.[13]

More importantly, Illich's philosophy of cultural detachment provided a whole new perspective for missionaries:

> Missionary Poverty is the core of missionary formation. The development of a missionary spirit will have to start from an analysis of the concept of spiritual poverty of Ignatian indifference or detachment. . . . Intellectual formation in the social sciences or linguistic studies for the missioner must be seen as an occasion and even as a means for development of a specific form of spiritual detachment and freedom for contemplative love corresponding to his very personal vocation.[14]

Illich believed that priests working with a foreign population should cultivate a spirit of "total cultural indifference, a beatitude of cultural poverty." Rather than serving in the traditional imperialist missionary mode, Illich asked clerics to serve parishioners as friends. In his unorthodox service to his parish, Illich cut through all formalities in order to meet the needs of the communicants. His deep respect for Puerto Rican culture resulted in a mutual reverence of his parishioners.

One story regarding Illich's style of service makes his relationship to his parish clear. In 1956, Illich decided to stage a national feast day for the Puerto Ricans of New York. June 24th was the traditional celebration of San Juan's Day, and although St.

---

[13] DuPlessix Gray, "The Rules of the Game," *New Yorker*, 25 April 1970, 44.

[14] Ivan Illich, "Missionary Poverty, an Aspect of Intercultural Formation," a leaflet, (Cuernavaca, Mexico: Center for Intercultural Documentation, 1962), 7.

Patrick's Cathedral had been celebrating San Juan Day since 1953, Illich wanted to celebrate in such a way that the Puerto Rican culture was represented in a more indigenous setting--outside, in the manner of a fiesta. He asked permission to hold the fiesta in the quadrangle of Fordham University. Cardinal Spellman was invited to be the guest of honor. Anticipating approximately 8,000 people, police were assigned accordingly. With the fiesta scheduled to start at noon, streams of Puerto Rican families began converging on Fordham at dawn. By noon, there were 35,000 people in the quadrangle where the Cardinal said mass. This was the first time the Puerto Ricans had gathered in such numbers to celebrate their cultural identity in a traditional indigenous fashion.

Although parishioners dearly loved him, Illich was never entirely at ease with other priests with whom he worked in New York. Some colleagues criticized him for an overabundance of zeal. He once turned to Father Connoly, a man from Hell's Kitchen who had worked as a butcher, and said wistfully, "I wish I had been a slaughterhouse butcher so I could be closer to other priests." Connoly smiled and told Illich, "You were not cast for the role of shepherd, but for empire."[15]

In 1956, Cardinal Spellman agreed to Illich's appointment as vice-rector of the Catholic University of Puerto Rico, where he was asked to start a pioneering center for the training of American priests. The training center's purpose was to steep American priests in various aspects of Puerto Rican and Latin American culture. "He made them [the future missionaries] live on the simplest of native diets, inspired them to travel to the wildest mountain regions of Puerto Rico on foot and horseback, and grilled them with cross-examinations worthy of a Jesuit novice-master."[16]

Throughout his stay in Puerto Rico, Illich aroused local ecclesiastical resentment by insisting that mainland-born clergy and religious were imposing North American-style Catholicism on an Hispanic culture. During the 1950s, the Catholic Church had grown increasingly hostile to the progressive government of Luis Muñoz Marin. Serving from 1949-1965, Muñoz Marin was the first elected governor of Puerto Rico. Founder of the Popular Democratic Party, Muñoz Marin won popularity for his support of economic and social reform. Promoting low-cost housing and land reform, he is also known for bringing industries to the island.

---

[15] DuPlessix Gray, "Rules of the Game," 44.

[16] DuPlessix Gray, "Rules of the Game," 44.

Illich, on the other hand, had made friends with many of the island's highest officials and worked for four years to reconcile the Church to Muñoz Marin's government. This conflict came to a head in the election year of 1960 when Bishop James P. Davis of San Juan and Bishop James E. McManus of Ponce formed a Catholic political party in large part to reflect their outrage over the birth-control program developed by Muñoz Marin. The bishops threatened excommunication for any Catholic who voted for Muñoz Marin. Illich soon became an opponent of the Catholic party. After this particularly bitter dispute, Illich was forced to end all of his work in Puerto Rico. He returned to New York, determined to reduce cultural ignorance and increase professional competence of North American and European Roman Catholics intending to go to the aid of Latin America. The Jesuits immediately appointed him to the political science faculty of Fordham University, and it was here that the Center for Intercultural Formation was incubated.

The Center for Intercultural Documentation

Established in 1961, the Center for Intercultural Formation, later changed to Center for Intercultural Documentation (CIDOC), had the joint support of Fordham University and the American Bishop's Committee in Latin America. Its opening coincided with the launching of the Alliance for Progress. It also coincided with the Pope's call to the North American Church to send 10% of its personnel--or about 20,000 priests and religious--to Latin America in order to alleviate the critical shortage of clergy on that continent. "Illich saw an ominous conjunction between the two projects. . . . Illich's

CIDOC--part language school, part conference center, part free university, part publishing house--was designed not so much to train missionaries as to keep all but the most progressive of them away."[17] In Illich's words,

> My institutional goal was to pick up the most generous men and women from the two dozen volunteer organizations which had sprung up and to offer a *very* different course. . . . It was simply a filter to get the future leadership, the potential leadership, of the different organizations, have them live with me and my friends and colleagues for four months, and if possible, come to decide to upset their own program. I wanted to point out the unwanted side effects on people caught up in these programs, the potential damage they would do in Latin America, and how crazy the illusion was that better understanding, international understanding, would happen because of their reports back to the U.S.[18]

Upon returning to New York, Illich studied a map of Latin America, searching for "a valley with an excellent climate, with a town not more than an hour away from a great library and a good university, and where housing and food would be cheap enough to accommodate many students." He flew to Santiago, Chile, and proceeded to walk and hitchhike to Caracas, Venezuela--a distance of 3,000 miles. South America provided no valley fitting Illich's specifications, so he continued his search northward, settling in Cuernavaca, Mexico, about 50 miles south of Mexico City. Although Cuernavaca is scenic with a consistently warm and sunny climate, it was the support that Illich found in the bishop of Cuernavaca, Bishop Mendez Arceo, that became a deciding factor in the location of CIDOC.

A year after Illich settled in Cuernavaca, Arceo emerged as the leader of the Second Vatican Council's ultra-progressive ecumenical wing. Known for his open-mindedness, Illich regarded him as a kindred spirit.

> I found in the Bishop a man for whom *le bon ton, le bon gout* were of supreme importance, a man with whom I could communicate on my own wave-length. I knew from the start that we could please and even surprise each other.[19]

Illich also received support from the more traditional wing of the Church. The center for

---

[17] DuPlessix Gray, "Rules of the Game," 46.

[18] Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*, 95.

[19] Francine du Plessix Gray, *Divine Disobedience: Profiles in Catholic Radicalism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 254.

"de-Yankeefication" had the express approval of Cardinal Spellman who considered it a continuation of the missionary training center Illich had established in Puerto Rico.

CIDOC became Illich's anti-school, existing as a source of criticism for all secular orthodoxies of development. It seems ironic that such a center existed in one of the most powerful and reactionary theocracies in Latin America. In *Divine Disobedience*, Francine du Plessix Gray related:

> Mexico was the first of the new lands to be evangelized in the missionary zeal of the Counter-Reformation, and it became the most powerful theocracy in Latin America. The spirit of dedication and of poverty preached by the first wave of Franciscan, Dominican, and Augustinian friars was quickly perverted by the Church's material enrichment. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Catholic Church controlled more than half of the money in circulation in Mexico and owned over half of its land. During the revolutions which swept through Latin America in the nineteenth century, the Mexican church aligned itself with wealthy landowners and sought alliance with numerous foreign powers that periodically invaded the country to combat its movements of liberation.[20]

As a result, the Church in Mexico was more violently persecuted by the 19th century's revolutionary governments and the 20th century's progressive governments than in any other nation. Lands, funds, schools, and hospitals were expropriated, and libraries and seminaries were closed.

> The Mexican hierarchy [of the Church] has emerged from these persecutions bitter and impoverished, nostalgic for its lost power. . . . Mexican Catholicism today is marked by what theologians call integralism--that wedding of reactionary politics with reactionary theology which has played a large role in protecting interests of oligarchies in many parts of the Latin American continent.[21]

Bishop Sergio Mendez Arceo of Cuernavaca was the one exception and so Illich was comfortable in establishing his center of institutional critique.

True to his support of nonschooling, none of the senior staff had a college degree. "The chief administrator, Valentina Borremans, was educated in a French convent school, worked in a bookshop, was a deep-sea diver with Jacques Cousteau, and among other things, played washboard in a jug band."[22] CIDOC had a 15,000-item research library that claimed unparalleled collections of religious history and treatises on the relationship between value systems and social change. Above all, the center was the locus of discussions among intellectuals of all political hues from all continents on subjects ranging from poverty to guerrilla insurrection. Discussions were open, but Illich made it clear that CIDOC was not to be used as a base for insurrection. He insisted that priests must abstain from direct political action. "The people who defined us as some sort of enemy usually knew nothing about what we were really doing," said Illich's close friend, Lee Hoinacki. "There were these illusions people had about what was going on there, and people seemed to operate in terms of those illusions in their estimation and in their actions against us."[23] Although Illich and Spellman often disagreed on central issues over the years, theirs was a relationship of deep respect. Cardinal Spellman, considerate of Illich's integrity, had defended him against attacks within the Church. Upon Spellman's death in late 1967, Illich's position became vulnerable. The papal bureaucracy viewed CIDOC as subversive and called Illich to Rome in June 1968 to answer questions about his rumored subversive activities. There he was confronted with a questionnaire inquiring about everything from his involvement in Haitian voodoo to his views on Limbo. When Illich refused to sign a required oath of secrecy regarding the meeting on the grounds that this would be "against the natural law of honesty in the Church," the Vatican officials ended the session. Soon after, Vatican declared CIDOC off limits to priests, nuns, and other religious.

---

[20] Du Plessix Gray, *Divine Disobedience*, 254.
[21] Du Plessix Gray, *Divine Disobedience*, 255.

On 15 March 1969, Illich wrote Archbishop Terence J. Cooke of New York:

> The proceedings of the Congregation of the Faith . . . aimed at my work and reputation . . . have cast over me the shadow of `notorious churchmen' and this interferes with my ministry, my work as an educator, and my personal decision to live as a Christian. . . . I now want to inform you of my irrevocable decision to resign entirely from church service, to suspend the exercise of priestly functions, and to renounce totally all titles, offices, benefits, and privileges which are

---

[22] Peter Schrag, "Ivan Illich: The Christian as Rebel," *Saturday Review*, 19 July 1969, 14-19.

[23] Schrag, "Ivan Illich," 15.

> due to me as a cleric.[24]

He did not ask to be relieved of his obligations for priestly prayer or clerical celibacy.

> In 1973 Illich decided it was time to dismantle CIDOC.
> I had come to the conclusion that all that I wished to achieve and that could be done had been done. That because of the funny image created, the physical danger to my collaborators had become something which it was difficult to take responsibility for. You must think what Latin America was at that moment. And I also understood that the place would not be able to save itself from university-like institutionalization. Stanford, Cornell, and some other universities had groups of three or four professors each who wanted to take over that place, which would have meant that the 63 people who, under the leadership of Valentina Borremans, actually ran and made the centre, none of whom had a college degree, most of whom had not finished elementary school, would be replaced by a new bunch of internationals.[25]

There were also changes in the Mexican economy, which Illich perceived. The center had been run on the surplus generated by the well-known language school and that depended on CIDOC's being able to charge American prices as it paid Mexican wages. The post-OPEC oil boom threatened this arrangement. Illich called together his staff of 63 and made a proposal. He convinced the staff that for whatever time it took, the income expenditure would not be spent on the purchase of new materials or airplane tickets for requested speakers, but rather the money would go into a fund and when the fund had reached one and a half times the salary mass of a year, it would be divided into sixty-three equal parts and the institution would be closed. This happened on CIDOC's tenth anniversary, April 1976, with a huge fiesta at which hundreds of people from the town were present.

Those involved with CIDOC dismantled the institution with a sense of acceptance. "The rapid changes in the very fluid program are at once the great asset of this contemporary program as well as the source of much criticism."[26] Beyond acceptance, Illich advised one to celebrate the mystery and surprise of perpetual renewal. At its height, Illich related, "The Center is like a party. It is a group of people who have rather unusual competencies living here together within a house with more rooms than we can use. So we invite guests."[27] CIDOC represented a commons in which inspired individuals united in the organic generation of knowledge. The joyful detachment from permanence and limitations provided the strength for this example of collective creativity.

---

[24] "Ivan Illich" *Current Biography*, 220.

[25] "Ivan Illich", *Current Biography*, 215.

[26] Key Yuasa, "The Center for Intercultural Formation in Cuernavaca: Creativity in the Definition of Goals, Flexibility in Program Structures of a Recently Established Study Center in Latin America," (Cuernavaca, Mexico: Center for Intercultural Studies, December 1967), 1.

Publications

Illich is best known for his controversial works written during this period of time (*Celebration of Awareness, Deschooling of Society, Tools for Conviviality, Medical Nemesis,* and *Toward a History of Needs.*)[28] Some of these books are collections of essays and speeches, and others were written with the intention of a lengthier publication. At this time, Illich was very much involved in fairly revolutionary rhetoric in Latin America. In January 1967, he wrote an article, "The Seamy Side of Charity," for the Jesuit magazine *America* (later to be included in *Celebration of Awareness*), which opposed the papal order issued in 1960 for the dissemination of 10% of effective United States and Canadian Catholic missionaries over the course of 10 years to Latin American countries.[29] Illich protested the transfer of United States living standards and expectations that he believed could only impede the revolutionary changes needed. Illich believed that organic, indigenous movements could only be thwarted by disconnected, disembodied institutions such as the Catholic Church. I make the distinction here between revolutionary and radical. Almost all of Illich's thoughts are radical. He asks us to question basic ideologies. This does not necessarily mean to negate but to allow for healthy reflection.

---

[27] Yuasa, "The Center for Intercultural Formation in Cuernavaca," 11

[28] Illich *Celebration* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1970); *Deschooling* (New York: Harper and Row, *1971);Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973); *Medical* Nemesis (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976); *Toward a History of Needs* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

[29] Ivan Illich, "The Seamy Side of Charity," in *Celebration.*

The importance of questioning institutionally generated knowledge was the main theme of all of these five works. Illich discussed how individuals derive much of their legitimacy from the shadowy institutional aegis under which they operate. "The deinstitutionalization of values is primarily the result of personal decision--I would rather speak about it as conversion--the decision to seek pleasure in leisure, in conviviality, rather than from production and consumption."[30]

His first book, entitled *Celebration of Awareness*, provided a critique of the Catholic Church in its institutionalization of faith as well as other ideologies that alienate humanity from dignity and joy. Illich made observations on the lives of Puerto Ricans in New York, the need for cultural humility, the importance of silence in language, and the Catholic Church in various roles: missionary to Latin America, recruiter and exploiter of priests, force of social change. Each essay was eloquent and moving. Described as a "radical humanist" by Eric Fromm, Illich has more in common with conservatives than liberals. Alternatives must emerge organically within the system. Individuals connected in collective Spirit are viewed as conceiving the "revolutionary" changes needed in transforming societal organization.

His successive works veered into social criticism relating to our reliance on materialism. Illich provided a discourse regarding the dangerous assumptions of economic scarcity. An industrial society defines our *needs* and then satisfies them for us at a phenomenal cost. These costs are both monetary and aesthetic. "Our present systems force us to develop and accept any improvement in machinery, equipment, materials, and supplies which will increase production and lower costs; our present systems force us to develop and accept advertising and consumer seduction," Illich lamented.[31] In *Deschooling*, he transferred this thought to the field of education, showing how we have been sold a bill of goods by professional educational interests. Now humanity "needs" education rather than having the inherent ability to learn autonomously. Further, professionals define our educational needs, confine educational resources to schools, and imprison us with increasing impotence. Illich continued with a heavy theological cast, negatively applying such words as "sacred, ritual, ceremonial, dogma." This traditional religious language suggested that schooling is a ritual that is rarely questioned.

---

[30] 'Part Moon, Part Traveling Salesman," transcript, 1.

[31] Illich, *Celebration*, 16.

Tools for Conviviality centers on the concept of instrumentally used objects and their appropriate uses. This theme surfaces throughout subsequent works as well. In explanation of this, Illich stated,

> In the study of theology, ecclesiology was my preferred subject; and within this discipline, liturgy. Liturgy, like ecclesiology, is concerned with sociogenesis. It inquires into the continued embodiment of the Word through rituals. Necessarily, these rituals often center on objects like tables, tombs, and chalices. So, my interest in these so-called *sacra* led me to the theory of instrumentally used objects. I pursued the nature of the artifact in the belief that understanding would deepen my insight into virtue in our epoch, especially in the virtue of charity.[32]

An ongoing discussion of tools pervades all of Illich's work, tools being any engineered means to an end. Illich focused on how tools affect the quality of life. He believed that when tools grow beyond a certain intensity, they inevitably frustrate the possibility of achieving the desired end. Once tools develop beyond natural proportion, they thwart the very cause one is promoting. Humanity used tools to create an environment, and now we find that *we* must change in an attempt to fit into the manipulated place. In such an unnatural situation, we spend our lives trying to reform ourselves rather than savoring the experience of living.

In *Medical Nemesis*, Illich examined contemporary medicine and came to the conclusion that "the medical establishment has become a major threat to health."[33] This is a searing critique of an institution that most of us have come to view as the answer to basic health needs. Illich contended that medicine actually sickens us--treatment creates illness. He referred to this as "iatrogenesis." Institutions that claim to heal, in reality expropriate humanity's coping ability. Until we re-establish the autonomy of the individual in caring for oneself, we will continue with ritualized infirmity.

---

[32] Illich, "Philosophy...Artifacts...Friendship," 2.
[33] Illich, *Nemesis*, 3.

Throughout *Nemesis*, Illich asserted that institutions form not only the character but the consciousness of humanity and the economic and political realities in which humans are able to imagine and believe. Health, learning, dignity, independence, and creative endeavor have come to be defined as little more than performance of the hospitals, schools, and other "social service" agencies that claim to serve these ends. "Improvement" or "progress" depends on allocating more resources to the management of the agencies in question.

Emerging Themes

Homo Educandus--Humanity as Needing Education

During his years in Puerto Rico, Illich increasingly worked with the bureaucratic school system in its "development" of "human resources" and its programs of "manpower planning"--terms that made him uncomfortable. In discussing this discomfort about the concept of planning with his mentor, Jacques Maritain, Illich said that he was bothered by the fact that Maritain had never discussed planning in any of his philosophy. Maritain had difficulty in understanding such a term. Ultimately, a moment of illumination helped him to see. "Now I finally understand. It's a new species of the sin of presumption, planning."[34]

In this sense, planning defends us against both surprise and dependence on others, themes that Illich elaborated in later works. These concepts of planning and educating were based on the assumption that individuals could not take responsibility for their own learning. Rather than basing learning on interests and existing talents, education in schools depended upon professionals diagnosing individual deficits and prescribing remedial action. Students, according to Illich, are stupefied within this ritual, which creates the myth that knowledge emanates only from institutions.

---

[34] Illich, *Nemesis*, 62.

> I, therefore, came to analyze schooling as a myth-making ritual, a ritual creating a myth on which contemporary society then builds itself. For instance, this builds a society which believes in knowledge and in the packaging of knowledge, which believes in the obsolescence of knowledge and in the necessity of adding knowledge to knowledge, which believes in knowledge as a value--not as the good, but as a value.[35]

In selling progress and development, schools breed addiction to agencies that "produce" knowledge that educational consumers need. "In this process, you are the consumer, and somebody else organizes the production of the thing you consume and interiorize, which is all basic for being a modern man, for living in the absurdities of the modern world."[36]

Institutions emerging from such a belief not only shape our preferences but also our sense of possibility. An industrial society has "converted us to the belief that man's needs were shaped by the Creator as demands for the products we have invented."[37] Illich refers to this as underdevelopment. This term implies the "surrender of social consciousness to prepackaged solutions."[38] Individuals, doubting their own self-worth, become dependent upon institutional solutions to complex problems that actually require more radical thought.

Houses of learning view each client as having special needs. Illich sees each as having special gifts. These needs are based on becoming a model consumer of institutionalized knowledge. Filling individual deficits increases conformity. Under this assumption, individuals sell themselves short. What could we possibly have to offer? Our institutions, which teach us to strive for and value sameness, leave little room for specialness. Standardization facilitates "planning." Workshops and seminars admonish us to *tolerate* difference. As we globalize and homogenize, we lose the sense of ourselves.

---

[35] Illich, *Nemesis*, 67.
[36] Illich, *Nemesis*, 67.
[37] Illich, *Celebration*, *161*.
[38] Illich, *Celebration*, 166

Although sameness makes life more efficient, we feel the loss of a valuable part of life. In our attempt to be productive, it is much more practical to honor mediocrity and minimize the value of difference, Toynbee's "nemesis of creativity." The beauty of the commons is diminished with the denial of discrete talents. In current production-line mentality, an individual whose actions vary from the norm can be detrimental. The mass media promulgates a monoculture. Although many speak of this loss, few are able to define its cause. Illich believes that beauty, mystery, and surprise, once very much a part of living, are diminished through our loss of self, rootedness, and community. He describes an organic creativity with dynamics that lead to the ultimate aesthetic--a thriving community rich in diverse gifts. Illich questions the assumption of neediness in lives; we each have gifts to celebrate, not deficits to be diagnosed, and it is this base that gives direction in life-long learning.

Unlike the seasoned consumers we have become, Illich extols that which cannot be quantified or bought. This flies in the face of a society that has been able to commodify almost everything. Musical talent has been replaced with the *compact disc*. Healing has been replaced with *medical benefits*. Recreation has become *television*. Learning has evolved into costly *schooling*. We define ourselves in the alienated sense of what we have consumed rather than who we are.

We listen to the institutionalized message that confuses wants with needs. One is more easily sold a bill of goods when one has accepted a definition of oneself as needy. In an attempt to assure their survival, institutions ask us to view ourselves as inadequate, insufficient, lacking, or incomplete--*homo educandus*. We are convinced that more will make us happier, when more really confuses the issue of who we are. Our sense of self has been created by others rather than discovered from within. We believe that we can engineer a soul rather than discover the already existing spirit.

Illich introduced the theme of neediness in *Deschooling Society* with great intensity. In this publication, he described school as an institution that perpetuates the myth of unending consumption (someone produces something and then produces the demand for it). Instruction contains a hidden agenda to perpetuate the existing cultural institutions that smother creativity. We become addicted to socially defined education and must expand schools to feed this addiction.

Illich uses schooling as a paradigm to raise the general question regarding the mutual definition of one's nature with the nature of modern institutions that characterize our world view and language. In this series of essays, Illich showed that "the institutionalization of values leads inevitably to physical pollution, social polarization, and psychological impotence; three dimensions in a process of global degradation and modernized misery."[19] Although the poor have always been powerless, the increasing reliance on institutional care adds to their helplessness. Obligatory schooling informs the poor just how deficient they are and increases their sense of impotency.

Illich did not suggest the complete elimination of schooling as was often the misinterpretation. Instead, he proposed a more autonomous and organic organization of the learning process. This organization would reflect a new relationship between humans and their environment. One of these suggestions included an "opportunity web" that allowed one to take advantage of experiences encountered in life. This web consists of four networks, each providing the learner with access to any educational resource one might find necessary to achieve individual goals. These include reference services to educational objects, skill exchanges, peer-matching, and reference services to educators-at-large. These informal arrangements would provide learners with opportunities to draw on the experience of peers or to entrust themselves to a guide of choice. Either way, individual potential is realized outside institutional agendas.

Since publishing *Deschooling*, Illich has carried this concept even further. Historically, he traced the emergence of *homo educandus* to the time of John Amos Comenius (1592-1670). Comenius was a Czech educator and bishop who pressed for more schools and universities in his promotion of a broad general education, which he considered necessary for living.

---

[19] Illich, *Deschooling*, 2.

> Education, as the term is now used, means learning under the assumption that this learning is a prerequisite of all human activities, while at the same time, the opportunities for this learning are by their very nature in scarce supply. Thus understood, learning is an aspect of life which can be adequately distinguished from other aspects. Learning precedes, if not temporally at least logically, the competent execution of a socially expected task.[40]

In other words, through the Comenius construct, learning became disembedded from living.

At this point, learning and education are separated. "Education is a process that is carried out with a destination in mind: the so-called educated person, the end result of the shaping process."[41] This forces society to define the qualities of an educated person. One follows a standard model rather than searching for the unique qualities one brings to living. Learning leads to a discovery of self; education leads to the formation of an image of an idealized universal self that has been defined by the dominant culture. In the sense that one now *needs* education to become what society defines as an educated person, education becomes a commodity to be acquired, a service that one consumes. Learning requires faith in undiscovered gifts; schooling stifles this specialness in the homogenization of selves.

Schooling is an epoch-specific form of education. Illich had originally used the metaphor of schooling as religion to indicate the blind rituals that prevent us from thinking critically. He found schools to be a relic of the industrial era that had actually become anti-educational and anti-social. Institutionally generated knowledge, which schooled people into their places, was the dogma offered by the new World Church--schools.

---

[40] Ivan Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past Lectures and Addresses 1978-1990* (New York and London: Marion Boyers, 1992), 115.

[41] Aaron Falbel in a letter to John Gatto explaining Illich's distinction between education and learning, 17 February 1995, copy received from Lee Hoinacki, 16 February 1998, Bremen, Germany.

> School is a ritual of initiation which introduces the neophyte to the sacred race of progressive consumption; a ritual of propituation whose academy of priests mediate between the faithful and the gods of privilege and power; a ritual of expiation which sacrifices its dropouts, branding them as scapegoats of underdevelopment.[42]

Although schooling is harmful to all, it is lethal to those who cannot invest in anything but minimal participation.

Education as Prison

In a more dramatic analysis, Illich uses the metaphor of a prison to explain the current function of schooling. Illich believes that prisons celebrate the ritual of people losing the freedom of true choice. These institutions are useless, damaging, and very costly. Illich compares education to the concept of Paidea:

> Paidea was founded on the freedom of the few, and directed toward their duties to the polis, as a whole. That whole included xenoi (foreigners), in free and slaves. The distinction between free and unfree was of the essence of paidea; it's a stain you cannot wash out. . . . Education lacks paidea's foundation in inequality, presupposes the notion of technology, and engenders dependence on outputs rather than on slave masters.[43]

Schooling has the dubious honor of minimizing all. Universal education defines all people as needing schooling that is learning produced under the assumption of a scarcity of knowledge. Universal schooling provides universal prisons.

In *Toward a History of Needs,* Illich delineated three factors involved in education that enslave individuals: enslavement to consumption, enslavement to industrial tools, and the enslavement of impoverishing wealth. The first enslaving illusion is based upon the idea that individuals are born to be consumers and that they can attain any of their goals by purchasing goods and services. "People become prisoners to time-consuming acceleration, stupefying education, and sick-making medicine because of a certain threshold of intensity where dependence on a bill of industrial and professional goods destroys human potential and does so in a specific way."[44]

---

[42] Illich, *Deschooling,* 63.

[43] Ivan Illich, "Homo Educandus Lost," speech delivered at Penn State University, 20 September 1997, copy provided by Ivan Illich, 16 February 1998, Bremen, Germany.

Schooling does increase the national income in that individuals become more productive and, in the process of being taught to consume, reinforce the increase of the gross national product. In fact, according to Illich, our schools are organized following the model of an industrial plant--information presented in fragments of curriculum that have been designed by management. "The legitimization of education by schools tends to render all non-school education as an accident, if not an outright misdemeanor."[45] This enslaving illusion forces us to commodify everything. We consume rather than live.

The illusion of enslavement to industrial tools causes people to become incapable of shaping their own needs. Our needs are shaped for us by educational institutions. Our needs for mechanically produced goods becomes greater and greater. Illich sees this "modernization of poverty" as a condition of our modern age as it creates false needs. Economic expansion deprives both rich and poor of their freedom and power to act autonomously, to live creatively. This confines humanity to survival through market relations. It is a true poverty of spirit that numbs the soul.

The third illusion of enslavement looks to experts for limits to growth. "Entire populations socialized to need on command are assumed ready to be told what they do not need."[46] This professional definition of rights extinguishes liberties. Once we have forfeited our autonomous rights to set limits, conglomerates set their own acceptable level of pollutants, educators set the acceptable limit to education, doctors set the acceptable limits to medical care. "In reality, as society gives professionals the legitimacy to define rights, citizen freedoms evaporate."[47]

---

[44] Illich, *Toward a History of Needs*, 37

[45] Illich, *Deschooling*, 119.

[46] Illich, *Deschooling*, 43.

Although mass schooling was only recently invented as a convenient way of "dumbing down" individuals to take their appropriate places in a modern consumer society, we cannot imagine life without it. Illich implores us to develop research *on* education rather than *in* education. He asks us to question the philosophical foundation upon which the assumption of schooling rests rather than finding ways to make it more efficient. If this were done, comparative education could become one of the rare fields that attempts to clarify one of the least recognized and most characteristic aspects of our age: "the survival, even at the heart of highly developed societies, of fantasies, behavioral rules, and patterns of action that have successfully resisted colonization by the regime of scarcity."[48] We have become prisoners to the professionals who create our educational addiction and then charge dearly for detoxification.

Critics

Illich's work on education, *Deschooling of Society*, is probably his most famous book. It is also his most extensively misunderstood work. One must remember that these views were expressed in the late 1960s and early 1970s when educational systems in the United States were under intense criticism. Educators and parents were looking for ways to deal with stifling schools. Although Illich's critique appealed to existential critics of oversocialization and to realist critics of policy gone awry, his analysis and suggestions were grounded in idealist metaphysics. Illich was not a proponent of Skinner's learning machine; neither did he advocate "if it feels good do it." Behind his critique of the socially constructed self was an immortal soul in search of its realization. His writing reflected neither modern nor postmodern thought. His suggestions were so revolutionary and were based on such a radical premise that he was frequently misinterpreted.

---

[47] Illich, *Deschooling*, 44.

[48] Illich, *Mirror*, 118.

The very title of this work, *Deschooling of Society*, seemed to raise issues of anarchy. If not for schools, how could one possibly learn? Illich advocated not for the abolition of schools but rather for the end of their compulsion. Informal learning webs emerging from a free exchange of educational services were the preferred organization for learning within Illich's concept. It was the social organization of learning opportunities and the crushing mandates of an obligatory system to which Illich objected in the existing institutionalized version. He wanted each true being to have the ability to manifest itself.

Throughout all his critiques, Illich *pro*scribes rather than *pre*scribes specific solutions. Always advocating for autonomy in the context of community, Illich places great faith in the human spirit. He believes that inspired connections of individuals develop far more creative solutions to societal problems than he alone could effect. Those of us who have been schooled to have less faith in ourselves would be more comfortable with specific blueprints rather than a philosophical basis. The critique that Illich's educational plan was "half-baked" or certainly not well thought-out was often voiced. Colin Greer wrote, "The procedures for institutional reform that Illich suggests add up to a vision of changed institutions rather than an assessment of how we can--step by step--get from where we are to where he envisions us."[49]

The most difficult of Illich's propositions for many people to accept was related to his rejection of the nearly universal assumption of economic scarcity. Once knowledge is commodified, it becomes a resource. It is then defined as scarce and, therefore, creates inequality in societal consumption. The discrepancy between the haves and the have-nots does not lie in equalizing access to commodified knowledge, as many neo-Marxist critics propose. Totally rejecting a materialist analogy, Illich would promoted knowledge as unlimited and non-commodified. Rather than equalizing the educational economy, he advised its dissolution. Herbert Gintis, misconceiving this stance, expressed displeasure with Illich's suggestions regarding deschooling in an article in a *Harvard Educational Review* article.[50] Gintis criticized Illich for providing a counsel of despair. Taking a typical Marxist position--that schools are the context for training workers--Gintis argued that students are acting in a rational manner as they participate in the consumption of institutional curriculums that will make them effective, albeit alienated, workers. Unless we can transform the system, it is impossible for the students to deschool, as school is intrinsic to the system.

---

[49] Colin Greer, "All Schooled Up," *After Deschooling What?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 82.

Gintis further criticizes Illich's very premise for learning: the discovery of the essence or Spirit that already exists within each individual. Gintis explained, "The most serious lapse in Illich's analysis is his implicit postulation of a human `essence' in all of us, preceding all social experience--potentially blossoming but repressed by manipulative institutions."[51] Gintis viewed individuals as social constructions without any kind of authentic core. Illich viewed individuals as bearers of Divine gifts. These gifts can only be be discovered through unplanned, unexpected, non-institutionalized experience. Only by critically questioning knowledge that is generated from institutions can one discover the "real" or "inner" self inferred by Illich and described by Thomas Merton.[52]

Although he invited criticism as a basis for more fruitful reflection, Illich rarely responded to critics on an individual basis. His premise that learning must take place in a relationship to Spirit was so foreign to most critics that dialogue was difficult; the best that could be expected was parallel discourse. As reactions to his first four books made obvious that many people neither understood nor shared Illich's idealistic, metaphysical, and epistemological platform, he seemed to draw back from the ritual public discourse that had characterized the early 1970s.

---

[50] Herbert Gintis, "Toward a Political Economy of Education: A Radical Critique of Ivan Illich's Deschooling Society," *The Harvard Educational Review* 42, 1 (February 1972).
[51] Gintis, "Political Economy of Education," 42.
[52] Thomas Del Prete, *Thomas Merton and the Education of the Whole Person* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1990), 39.

> This campaigning period of my life extended from, let's say, 1962 to 1972. And during that time, at a certain moment, I came to feel like a jukebox. Arguments I had made a year or two before on a 33 rpm record were now down to a short one, to a 45 rpm. When I arrived in front of my audience, I told them, "Just push the right combination of buttons, I'll deliver what you called me here to do and then, let's talk. Let's get it over with so we can have our discussion."[53]

In the next decade, Illich turned from the importance of critically assessing knowledge to the connection of knowledge to nature and, concomitantly, through embodied experience, self.

When asked by David Cayley of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in a 1992 interview how he felt as he looked back on these first works, Illich replied,

> With a very pointed pencil, I succeeded in saying many things quite well. But the context and my way of saying things have changed. So I close the book and put it away. This is the strange experience that I'm having at the moment. You have asked me about a man that has been. It is I, yes, take full responsibility. I wrote these books or pamphlets for the moment. . . . When I wrote *Tools for Conviviality*, I was in the middle of a political struggle in South America, actually being shot at and beaten up with chains because I ridiculed the Peace Corps and the volunteers the Pope sent down there and because I questioned the desirability of making the professional state-of-the-art northern countries into the norm of how schools should develop in South America.[54]

During the next decade, Illich perceived a change of sense in the way we live. Ever more distanced from the natural world, technology allows one to learn through images. Our sense of self has been distorted. Learning based on what humanity had created rather than Divine creation causes us to view ourselves as a reflection of the machines and constructed images with which we work. Life as system becomes easier to manage, but remote and minimal.

---

[53] Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*, 119.
[54] Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*, 119.

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING: THE KNOWLEDGE CONNECTION

Human Knowledge is at the same time true and not fully sufficient.

St. Thomas Aquinas, 1272

Background 1978-1988

As was mentioned earlier in the discussion, St. Thomas asserted that all knowledge, including the spiritual, takes as its starting point sense perception. Further, humanity consists of the unity of body and soul. The body belongs to the essence of an individual. The body is not the ultimate bearer of knowledge, but rather *humanity*, which is composed of body and soul, is the ultimate bearer of knowledge. Therefore, knowledge is approached through the intellect but has no meaning until one applies it to the task of self-discovery. Although the Divine exists within each of us, we initially discover this self through sensual experience and our groundedness within this experience. Learning takes place within a specific physical presence. From 1978 to 1988, Illich became increasingly concerned with technology that distanced us from such sensory and grounded experience associated with the natural or the *creatura*of the Creator.

Prior to the industrial revolution, life centered on the home. Working, learning, living were an integrated whole. There was an integrity to life as learning and doing were one and the same. Experience was not fragmented. With work moving into factories and workplaces outside the home and education moving into separate facilities, life spheres became disembedded. One worked at a certain location, learned in another, all the while *living* elsewhere. It became difficult if not impossible to apply knowledge to a sense of integrated self.

Similarly disturbing, the advent of the computer disembodied learning. One learned from images rather than natural phenomena. One now viewed oneself as a "system" rather than a life. We had removed ourselves further and further from the *real.* Illich's writing during the 1980s reflected his growing concern with the fragmentation of life experience and disembodiment of learning. Unable to know what is real, individuals apply distorted knowledge to socially (that is, artificially) concocted selves.

An experience early in the 1970s led Illich to realize the importance he needed to place on "grounded experience." During the summer of 1971, Pupul Jayakar, one of India's leading intellectuals, had come across Illich's *Deschooling* when on a lecture tour in California. She was so intrigued with the intensity and originality of thought presented in the book that on her return to India she gave a copy to Indira Gandhi. Gandhi found the book to be relevant to the Indian situation and arranged for Illich to be invited to India. Hesitating at first to accept this invitation, Illich ultimately acquiesced. He met with Gandhi over dinner at the home of Jayakar in the late autumn of 1972. Indira Gandhi asked Jayakar to help institute several of Illich's concepts for a more loosely structured educational system. Jayakar suggested that Illich visit Rajghat and meet Krishnamurti, one who had been proclaimed the world teacher-to-be in 1909 when he was just fourteen. This proclamation was made by Annie Besant, then president of the Theosophical Society. The Theosophical Society was a movement that combined Western occult philosophy with Buddist and Hindu teachings.

On 27 November 1972, Illich and Krishnamurti, in the company of Pupul Jayakar, met and discussed the chaos and corruption of contemporary education in the world. "Illich spoke of his concern with liberating the individual from the illusions about what he owed society."[1] Although sharing mutual concerns, Jayakar tells in her biography of Krishnamurti that the two had difficulty finding common ground for discussion.

---

[1] Pupul Jayakar, *Krishnamurti : A Biography* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), 303.

Both agreed that institutions had become corrupt, but Illich believed that we must be grounded in a tradition of thought in our attempt to transform society. Krishnamurti, on the other hand, believed that one must step out of the stream and be free of tradition.

> Krishnaji and Illich shared a sense that compassion was essential and that it did not demand of people that they change into this or that. Illich had sensed the rootedness of Indian women and the danger of their losing this contact with tradition and life. He felt grateful for his own roots in certain traditions. He did not want to let go of the great help and discipline that traditions sometime give.[2]

This importance of rootedness and connection to tradition helps explain why Illich, so critical of the institutional Church, still found it essential to think through a Catholic tradition of thought. For him this basis was provided by St. Thomas who defined learning as an embodied and connected journey in search of Spirit.

In a discussion of knowledge, Krishnamurti believed that we are second-hand human beings--all knowledge is second-hand. To be free of this second-hand quality one must know from the Divine source. One cannot accumulate knowledge. This second-hand knowledge is the result of experience. For Krishnamurti, experience was dangerous because it was grounded in institutional streams.

> But Illich felt committed to the little streams, those rich traditions that have given form to human life, forms that if permitted to become `gods or hierarchies' could be as destructive as other destructive streams. In that sense of belonging he was prepared to be second-hand. He felt a responsibility to help people become critical, . . . even if it meant being partially second-hand.[3]

Humanity is required to live through corporal experience. It is this collection of experiences that allows us to make critical decisions through the duration of time.

Illich believed that it is necessary to show people what not to do. The path for each individual differs and the creative solutions to problems are many. For Krishnamurti, to know what not to do is to do the right thing. At last, common ground.

> Illich perceived this instantly. A new movement had started. He felt responsible for translating knowledge into extremely lucid terms. To Krishnaji, that came later. One did not need experiential knowledge to know God. It was first neces-

---

[2] Jayakar, *Krishnamurti*, 305.

[3] Jayakar, *Krishnamurti*, 305.

> sary not to belong to any society, any nation.[4]

Connection to nature and place merely distracted. Worldly knowledge had no place in Divine knowledge.

Illich's response was intense. To Illich, roots were more than a sense of nationalism. He believed knowledge (specifically knowledge of self) could only be achieved through embodied experience and connection. He was not prepared to let go of these.

> Krishnaji felt that without a solution of this central problem, there could be no flowering of man. The flowering had to take place. Illich felt there was little hope of solving the central problem. He was prepared to accept and to live and die with something short of perfection. Krishnaji and Illich had come to a parting of ways.[5]

But for a time Illich found the Eastern philosophical base an outsider's platform from which to critically view Western knowledge.

Illich's emphasis on connection and embodiment almost seems like a contradiction to his position on the necessity of detachment in connecting knowledge. Although holding that sensible experience is necessary to "know," Illich very much believed that knowers must then distance themselves for analysis of such knowledge. In order to find ways to think through metaphors, language was an important tool for Illich. Realizing the Asian experience to be so foreign to his thought, he believed for a time that by describing the history of Western thought through Oriental languages, he might find the ultimate linguistic distance necessary for critical analysis. Following the closing of CIDOC, Illich spent several years learning Oriental languages and walking through Southeast Asian countries.

> I found out that my brain was already too used, I was too old, I couldn't do it, and even if I could do it, probably I wouldn't be able to write the stuff which I wanted. I saw that northern India, when I finally got enough into language and people, wasn't far enough away and was already too British to do what I wanted to do. So I moved another step further, into the Middle Ages. I went back to the 12th century, which I always loved, to certain authors like Heloise, like Abelard, affectionately acquainted with, and began for almost ten years to teach medieval intellectual history, in French and mostly in German, in order to figure out what

---

[4] Jayakar, *Krishnamurti*, 306.
[5] Jayakar, *Krishnamurti*, 307.

> would happen if I described a transportation system to a very brilliant and adaptable and sensitive monk of the year 1135, and began to play with Latin dialogues in which I explain De Transportatione, De Educatione, to get a certain distance, to become a migrant between two space times, as Einstein says "spimes," our certainties and that other world of certainties.[6]

When Illich realized that Asian languages would not serve his purpose of seeking critical connection between knowledge and self, he sought distance through time. Seeking a position to teach medieval history, he ended up at the University of Marburg in Germany. "Illich concluded that the twelfth century was probably as close as he would get to what he was looking for--a fulcrum with which he could lever contemporary people out of their certainties."[7] He rented a small apartment there and taught 300 "particularly gifted" students. Several of these young men were especially interested in doing research on the twelfth century in Illich's style of forced detachment.

> I tried to get people to understand how immensely distant the mental world is in which the 12th century authors moved. I do this in order to pull the students out, away from the typewriter, their felt-tipped pen, the telephone they have to grab, in order to give them the sense of a trip between two space times, ours and that other time. I then try to keep them for a while, becoming aware how much they are strangers, how little they can use their own concepts, their own modern German or English or French words, to translate these Latin texts, and prepare them then to re-enter the modern world in which they feel at home.[8]

Illich believed that by doing this, he was "cultivating disciplined states of altered awareness, cultivating daydream states, rooted thoroughly in what has been in the past, recovered by good historical method."[9] Illich's works during this period traced the society's movement from a saclar to secular orientation, the displacement of sacred as the basis for learning. Vernacular life, where good is not reduced to a monetary value, is viewed as the only antidote to economic development, which accelerates materialistic impulsion.

At this time Illich had also started a collaboration working on body history with Barbara Duden. Their work resulted in Illich's discussion of the importance of gender in embodied learning. His radical comments regarding the futility of women's attempt to find equality in the workplace caused a stir. Illich believed that rather than trying to become poor imitations of men in the workplace, women should celebrate those qualities that had come to be associated with their gender. Illich laments the passing of a time when gender identity provided rootedness in a culture. Work that was centered in the home provided distinct definition for equalized male and female roles. Industrialization and its resulting structure of modernity have provided a time when the only distinguishing characteristics between the sexes is biological. The current workplace arena promotes equality at the expense of gender identification. Roles for men and women become blurred with identification of self imperceptible.

---

[6] "Part Moon, Part Traveling Salesman," transcript, 15.
[7] "Part Moon, Part Traveling Salesman," transcript, 15.
[8] Illich, "Part Moon, Part Traveling Salesman," 16.
[9] Illich, "Part Moon, Part Traveling Salesman." 16.

Most critics did not understand Illich's distinction between gender and sex. In fact, Illich was teaching at the University of California-Berkeley at the time and used this topic as the basis for a series of lectures. A week after the series was completed, a group of seven senior professors at Berkeley who had been angered by what they had perceived as an attack on feminist issues organized a symposium during which each of them would refute Illich's research. They were each allowed twenty minutes to discuss their point. Illich was then allowed ten minutes to answer all seven of them. The series of papers presented by the faculty members was then published in a journal and a copy was sent to Illich. Illich was most upset with the premise of these papers, that by improving their own *personal* status all women would be helped. As many others before them had done, these individuals missed Illich's deeper message that celebrated the uniqueness of gender that had been ameliorated in the industrial arena.

Emerging Themes

The themes that emerged at this time examine how knowledge must be embodied and embedded in our lives if it is to speak to our sense of self. This implies that knowledge must not only be connected to our natural context, but the tools with which we learn must also provide affiliation with what is *real*. Humility and silence are suggested as paths to connection. The dangers of disconnected technology as learning tools and disinvolved content-sensitive help are also discussed as impediments to authentic learning that tend to distort our sense of self and other.

Connection of Body to Tools

Illich viewed humanity as becoming increasingly distanced from the natural as technology allows us to shrewdly maneuver our environment so that we are no longer exposed to the vagaries of nature. Our bodies are no longer even attached to our tools as we learn through images on Windows 95. Tools no longer affect our lives but in more insidious fashion transform how we view our *selves*. Having no true sense of self allows one to look at the body as a system, separate from soul, that can be managed and manipulated. At this time, Illich's change in focus moves from how tools affect our lives to how tools affect our perception of *self*. Technology has redefined humanity from tool-user to an evolved product of engineering. Deprived of our senses, we can no longer experience. Our void of sensory experience robs us of our ability to remember or even recall memories to use in metaphorical learning. Not being able to know our authentic selves, it becomes difficult to discover our natural gifts. Connections that might have provided for a sharing of gifts and a sense of moral limitation in deference to others in community are lost.

The Danger of Knowledge Disconnected from Natural Context

I group the next three of Illich's books for discussion because they all reflect his reading of the works of Karl Polanyi, Leopold Kohr, and E. F. Schumacher.[10] These publications include *Shadow Work, Gender,* and *The Right to Useful Unemployment*.[11]

---

[10] Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Octogon Books, 1944); Leopold Kohr, *The Breakdown of Nations* (London: Routledge, 1986); E. F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful* (London: Abacus, 1974).

[11] *Shadow Work* ((Salem, NH: Marion Boyars, 1981); *Gender* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1982); *The Right to Useful Unemployment* (London: Marion Boyars, 1978).

Each echoed the message that humanity must respect natural limits and size. Knowledge must be connected to physical and environmental parameters.

Leopold Kohr, whom Illich had met on his first evening at the University of Puerto Rico, was teaching in Puerto Rico at the same time. Kohr elaborated on the writings of E. F. Schumaker, who popularized the saying, "Small is beautiful." Basically, Kohr spoke to the fact that a decent common life is predicated on respecting natural proportion. Illich described Kohr's thought:

> He would say that . . . a *mousy* thing with its thin legs and that big roll-shaped body of a rat or a mouse can exist for physical reasons only in a range of one to ten inches long. It couldn't possibly grow to the size of an elephant. No materials are known out of which legs could be made to remain that thin if they had to move that weight. So also there are societies and aspects of societies which can survive only within certain narrow limits of size. . . . Very few people have understood how deep the relationship is between social form and social size.[12]

In a tribute to Kohr, Illich further discussed the concept of natural proportion. Ignoring appropriate limitations of nature, we distort social relations at the expense of harmony. Our senses must be acutely tuned to avoid such cacophony.[13]

At this point Illich dealt with the connection of knowledge and technology as it affects our understanding of self. This transformation of Illichian thought related to society's contemporary perception of an objectified body as machine--body as system--and how this affects learning. Increasingly, we have separated learning and doing, which has resulted in a loss of sensory experience in the process of learning. With knowledge no longer rooted in person or place, learning has become disembedded from life and disembodied in experience. We need to understand the effect of technology as it distances humanity from the natural.

---

[12] Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*, 83.

[13] Ivan Illich, "The Wisdom of Leopold Kohr," *Papers on Proportionality* (University Park, PA: Penn State STS Program, 1996), 1.

Humility as a Base of Connection

Illich became increasingly concerned about our losing touch with the corporeal and, in the process, losing our sense of self. The place and culture in which one is grounded is of the utmost importance in providing the context for learning. Appreciation of another culture, which Illich often addressed in his earliest work in Latin America, is so complex that it requires something almost paradoxical. Illich asks individuals to disembody themselves so as to become re-embodied in the unknown. Imagination and cultivation of the senses are required for such a task. This approach to cultural understanding is quite different from that often espoused by some type of tribal identity that requires one to demand respect for one's culture. Illich insisted that one must demand respect for another's culture before one can connect or understand the uniqueness of *other*. This mindset is more likely than not to come from imperialistic cultures, but identity politics can become a barrier for any individual who refuses to identify with an *other*. For Illich, cultural appreciation asks one to step out of one's own culture so that immersion in another's culture might be possible in a gesture of understanding and friendship. Although always insisting on the importance of questioning ideologies through distance, over the years Illich shifted his focus to the embodied experience as we reconnect to the real through sensory appreciation of the natural environment. He saw that as soon as we had disembedded the economic sphere into an artificially constructed fragment, we also allowed ourselves to define life as a secular commodifiable system that was amenable to management, improvement, and evaluation in terms of available resources that prior to this time had been impossible to envision.

The Role of Silence in Connection

Illich was described as a xenophile--one who embraces difference. His love for and identification with the different and foreign pervaded much of his earliest works. Indeed, he continually asked people to become comfortable with the unknown or different throughout his earliest writings. However, in his anti-imperialistic stance, he asked individuals to immerse themselves in a person's human condition, reflecting place and individual concerns. One must disembody oneself to insert oneself intellectually and emotionally into another's experience. Although this seems like a contradiction of thought, he showed how this can be accomplished through the appreciation of silence.

This theme began in *Celebration of Awareness: A Call for Institutional Revolution.* Many essays published in this volume were written in reaction to the movement at that time by the United States and the Catholic Church to "develop" those countries who did not share their industrial mentality. Sent to Puerto Rico to train missionaries for their tour of duty (specifically regarding acquisition of foreign languages and immersion in the Latin American culture), Illich advocated the withdrawal of all North American volunteer armies from Latin America: missionaries, Peace Corps members, and other groups who were descending upon Latin American countries with the intention of saving them through the consumption of North American culture. Illich referred to these "do-gooders" as "vacationing salesmen for the middle-class American Way of Life." Although he claimed to have a deep faith in the enormous good will of the U.S. volunteer, he believed that this good faith could only be explained by an "abysmal lack of intuitive delicacy." Illich found the belief that all Americans must share God's blessings with their "poorer" fellow neighbor to be quite offensive, particularly in light of the fact that our commodification of all life spheres was more deeply enmeshed in a modernized poverty of spirit. "All of this points toward the need the Puerto Ricans have to win respect for their background. What they need is not more help but less categorization according to previous schemes, and more understanding."[14]

Illich believed that anyone working with a foreign population should cultivate a spirit of "total cultural indifference, a beatitude of cultural poverty." One must be distanced from one's immediate world and experience in order to immerse oneself in another's so to better connect in understanding--the ultimate act of humility.

---

[14] Illich, *Celebration*, 40.

Illich went on to discuss this cultural humility in terms of various types of silence. He did this in the context of a foreign language. This is an important example of his attempt to describe that which is linguistically impossible, to describe the nuances of silence one needs to learn in appreciation of a foreign culture. Illich told us that learning a foreign language has a much deeper meaning than that of linguistic expertise. "The learning of a language is more the learning of its silences than its sounds."[15] Illich distinguished between various silences. The silence that nurtures a celebration of diversity is the silence of a pure listener, the silence of deep interest. The greater the distance between the two worlds, the more the silence of interest is a sign of love.[16]

This silence is often threatened by the silence of disinterest, which assumes that there is nothing I want or can receive from the other. "It is the silence of a missioner who never understood the miracle of a foreigner whose listening is a greater testimony of love than the other who speaks."[17] Illich explained that although it is easy for an American to listen to chitchat about football, it is a sign of love for one to listen to the *jai lai* reports.

The third type of silence Illich describes is the silence of patience, as one understands that one word is not just as appropriate as another, particularly between cultures. This silence applies to those who look for a language equivalent in their own language rather than taking the time to find the culture-specific appellation or gesture. It is "the man who does not give the seed of a new language time to grow on the foreign soil of his soul."[18] Illich calls us to speak and listen to the *living* language, including the silences, of others.

Finally, Illich believes one must understand the silence that goes beyond words--everything that can be said has been said. Conversely, this can be the silence that is indifferent to life in its deadness. Illich made it clear that there can be noise and agitation in this deadly silence, but ultimately it is the silence of nonacceptance.

---

[15] Illich, *Celebration*, 45.
[16] Illich, *Celebration*, 47.
[17] Illich, *Celebration*, 47.
[18] Illich, *Celebration*, 48.

By acknowledging these four silences, a missioner can appreciate silence as a gift. "If the missioner forgets this and attempts to conquer by his own power that which only others can bestow, then his existence begins to be threatened."[19] Illich emphasizes that we best appreciate a foreign culture by distancing ourselves and respecting the silences as well as the voiced interaction.

The Need for the Development of Knowledge in Integrated Lives

By the time Illich had published *Tools for Conviviality* in 1973, he had been influenced by reading Karl Polanyi, who addressed the implications of disembedding our economic life sphere. This phenomenon, which reflected fragmented industrial production, caused us to fragment life spheres in an attempt to make them more manageable and commodifiable. Generalizing this principle to education, Illich realized that just as an economy defines one as needy in the sense that one *needs* commodities, education diagnoses everyone as *needing* education and then provides the antidote in the form of lifelong schooling. As was discussed in the previous chapter, he named this phenomenon *homo educandus* and discussed the need to live a life of integrity. Integrity in this sense refers to a life that is whole and of strong moral principle. At this point, Illich no longer criticized individual institutions but rather the mental model in which institutions made sense.

As Illich discussed this concept in these various institutions, he began to see a pattern of disembedding life spheres. Early in his writing and thinking he discussed the disembedding of an economic life sphere, over time, Illich saw how we increasingly disembedded other life spheres; religion, education, medical care, transportation. Where once we spoke of faith, learning, healing, and movement all in relation to an integrated life, after accepting the concept of an economy, these verbs became nouns that one might commodify. Where once these areas of human lives were integrated and viewed in a natural interdependence, our current industrialized and commodified lives allowed us to fragment these areas where they no longer were forced to respect natural proportion. Knowledge had been disembedded from life experience. Disembedded life spheres were forced out of natural balance. As we fell into the trap of "life as system," it became easy to deny our senses, indeed our bodies and our lives. "To consider what is appropriate or fitting in a certain place leads one directly into reflection on beauty and goodness. The truth of one's resultant judgment will be primarily moral, not economic."[20] Increasingly, Illich lamented the loss of sensibility as life became something one managed rather than lived. We were losing an appreciation for life as art.

---

[19] Illich, *Celebration*, 48.

What Illich saw as being lost, then, is the aesthetic, which is impossible to quantify or commodify. Just as the Aztecs believed that true knowledge of the Divine could only be attained through artistic creation, so Illich believed that we have lost what is real as we deny our senses and, in the process, our selves. Our metaphor of body as computer has us experiencing life as images, not reality. Rather than viewing ourselves within embodied experience, we allow others to define us and deny our unique beauty. The image that we have been sold--that of body as a lifeless system--denies our creativity. "Therefore, it appears to me that we must recover the use of our senses in a society of technogenic images."[21]

Illich--the man who "lives in a tent"--mourns the loss of vernacular. Vernacular for Illich implies a sense of specialness, a sense of place, a unique sense of being.

> Vernacular comes from an Indo-Germanic root that implies `rootedness' and `abode.' *Vernaculum* as a Latin word was used for whatever was homebred, homespun, homegrown, homemade, as opposed to what was used in formal ex-

---

[20] Ivan Illich, "The Wisdom of Leopold Kohr," 3.

[21] Ivan Illich, "An Address to Master Jacques," speech given at Bordeaux, France, 13 November 1993, translation from the French by Lee Hoinacki, 27 June 1994, 1.

> change. . . . We need a simple straightforward word to designate the activities of people when they are not motivated by thought of exchange, a word that denotes autonomous, non-market related actions that by their nature escape bureaucratic control, satisfying needs to which, in the very process, they give specific shape. . . . By speaking about vernacular language and the possibility of recuperation, I am trying to bring into awareness and discussion the existence of a vernacular mode of being, doing, and making in a future society [that] might again expand all aspects of life.[22]

Illich often wrote about the loss of locale in reference to language. He related this to the rationalized development of spoken and written language in the West. In the pursuit of efficiency to meet bureaucratic needs of the state, language was standardized, limiting the parameters with which one views the world. As early as 1492, Antonio de Nebrija developed a standard of grammar for his queen, Isabel la Catolica, to replace the vagaries of the Castillian language. In a letter to the queen, he extolled the benefits of a standard language that would contribute to the expansion of her empire. Although barriers to communication were minimized, language used to express one's worldly perspective became homogenized.

The beauty of language nuance, as well as important human values that were imbedded in vernacular idioms, were lost. Language rich in local culture became subsumed in "taught mother tongue." Illich explained,

> Cultures that lived mostly on the sun subsisted basically on vernacular language that was absorbed by each group through its own roots. Just as power was drawn from nature mostly by tools that increased the skill of fingers and the power of arms and legs, so language was drawn from the cultural environment through the encounter with people, each of whom could smell and touch, love and hate.[23]

Prior to our embracing a bureaucratic standard of communication, language consisted of that grown on the speaker's own grounds as opposed to that planted by others. Language was an art reflective of an area's unique culture. "Our disengagement from sense of place has been magnified in the deconstructionist post-modern analysis which asserts that we never know about our local patch of the biosphere because we can only know what our particular society has invented."[24] This process is a denial of what is real and organic. Bureaucratized language is a tool that further removes us from our roots and invites mediocrity with silencing of inspired selves.

---

[22] Illich, *Shadow Work*, 49-50.

[23] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past*, 121.

Illich provides us with another example of connection to place that we have lost through the concept of dwelling. "To dwell is an art. . . . The human is the only animal who is an artist, and the art of dwelling is part of the art of living."[25] Speaking of a time past when one actually created a living space, he said, "To dwell then meant to inhabit one's own traces, to let daily life write the webs and knots of one's biography into the landscape."[26] Illich went on to compare vernacular architecture to vernacular speech. Each reflects the culture in which one is immersed. "For the dweller, the center of the world is the place where he lives."[27] All living centers on the place where one dwells, unlike today where one centers life on the place one works for wages that pays for the place where we now only sleep. As Illich explains, we live our life by a phone and sleep next to a garage. Today one *resides*, and "the resident lives in a world that has been made, not one which he or she had constructed."[28]

> Housing provides cubicles in which residents are housed. . . . The art of living is forfeited; he has no need for the art of dwelling because he needs an apartment; just as he has no need for the art of suffering because he counts on medical assistance and has probably never thought about the art of dying.[29]

This concept of disembedding life spheres greatly influences the concept of work and gender. Prior to the industrial age, work centered on the home, and although the work of men and women was asymmetrical, both roles were honored. Once work in factories encouraged families to depend on wage labor, the work that added quality to the home was disvalued. Wage earning (usually accomplished by men) clearly became a priority. Artistic dwelling was replaced by efficient laboring. Now, rather than creating a home, one worked for wages to afford a residence.

---

[24] Charlene Spretnak, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1997), 27.
[25] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past*, 55.
[26] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past*, 55.
[27] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past*, 57.
[28] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past*, 57.
[29] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past*, 57.

Once these life spheres were disembedded, aesthetic lives became impossible as fragments of life were stretched out of proportion. Learning no longer took place in a natural context but rather in a distorted reality separate from living.

> It was at this point that Illich became increasingly interested in analyzing not what tools *do* but what they say to a society and why society accepts what they say as a certainty. . . . *The* most important effect which our major tool systems have is to shape our view of reality and to generate in us a set of certainties.[30]

Having discovered learning to be disembedded and disembodied, Illich delved into the history of what a body is and found that there were major changes in this perceived reality in the twelfth century. Having searched the Asian nations for a cultural detachment from which to view this technological phenomenon of life as senseless system and finding that the difficulty of complex languages presented a barrier to dialogue, he turned to the world of twelfthth-century Europe in the personification of Hugh of St. Victor.

Hugh was a Parisian monk who attempted to develop thought that would reconcile philosophy and technology. Hugh described enlightenment in a visual manner. Everything resolves into light.

> In his doctrine, he has three pairs of eyes: the eyes of the body with which he grasps the physical things, and the eyes of the mind with which he understands what's really in them and what really relates them to each other, and the eyes of the heart which must slowly open and with which once he looked into the invisible, unspeakable, unlimited light of God. Now, living with that concentration in all his reflections on light, he feels that the worst thing which has happened as a consequence of disobedience in paradise is an obscuring, a shadow which has fallen between man and creation in which God has placed him, because God has made man so that he fits into a garden.[31]

But according to Hugh, although humanity was created with a body fit to live in paradise, after they had destroyed the balance of the universe by eating from the forbidden tree they were given the human body, which bled from every thorn and felt the cold of exposure.

---

[30] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past,* 111.

[31] "Part Moon, Part Traveling Salesman," transcript, 17.

> Hugh developed a theology of technology in which technology is an activity by which man, thanks to what God has given him in creation, remedies in part what he has lost through his ecological intervention, which was sin. Tools are a search for a remedy, tool making is a kind of penitential activity.[32]

Illich tells us that, within a couple of generations of Hugh's death, tools were seen as a means of subduing nature rather than helping humanity live comfortably within nature.

Throughout his works, Illich examined the correlation between the nature of tools and the meaning of justice that prevails in the society that uses them. Illich believes that knowledge is a tool in discovering the Divine within us. He uses the term "tool" in an extremely broad sense. In *Tools for Conviviality*, Illich defined tools as any means to an end. So a hammer, a highway, and a healthcare system are all tools. He advocates for the use of convivial tools that "respect natural scales, enhance relatedness, and foster autonomy as well as natural competence."[33] The challenge comes in integrating technology and theology.

Illich goes on to suggest that the concept of the tool and the Christian theological concept of the sacrament are closely related. Although the tool does what an individual wants it to do, the sacrament is a sign that God allows one to place and that does what God wants to do more or less independently of the intention of the priest who administers it. When Christianity is rejected or forgotten, an unreasoning faith in tools reaches a sacramental level. Tools become the embodiment of God's will. Illich believes that this is corruption of Christian ideals within Western thought. Humanity denies natural limits as it develops technology in its efforts to improve upon God's creations. Knowledge in this sense does not connect to nature and self but rather distorts and manipulates nature.

---

[32] "Part Moon, Part Traveling Salesman," transcript, 17.

[33] Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*, 110.

Embodied Search for Authentic Self

Hugh's *Didascalicon* documented a history of reading that paints a picture of sensual learning as one savors words in his book subtitled *de arte legendi* or "the art of reading." For Hugh, reading was a kinesthetic activity involving the hands, mouth, tongue, eyes, and ears, but more importantly the heart. In *In The Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon*, Illich deplored the loss of sensory experience in our learning as we moved from monastic learning to lay literacy. He characterized lay literacy as reading for secular knowledge rather than a search for Spirit. Although Illich still maintained a distance of eight centuries, his work took on a subjective voice as we view reading through the eyes of Hugh, who advised us to read utilizing our eyes as the source of illumination for the mind and heart. Knowledge has unique connections for each person. Individuals bear the responsibility of seeking that knowledge that illuminates their discrete gifts.

Illich opens his latest publication, *In the Vineyard of the Text*, with a quote by Hugh: "Of all things to be sought, the first is wisdom."[1] *Vineyard* is a historical documentation of just how drastically this search for wisdom has changed since the 12th century. Hugh was influenced by Augustine's view that wisdom was not some*thing* but some*one*. True wisdom was finding the Christ within us. Hugh used visual images to describe the act of reading. "Wisdom illuminates man so that he may recognize himself."[2] Illich interprets: "Approaching wisdom makes the reader radiant. . . . The world is represented as if its beings all contained their own source of light."[3] It is this spark that one searches for in reading. In this sense, learning is based upon self-discovery. It is understood to involve the "formation of the whole person which implies an effort to foster an increased openness, attentiveness, and truthful responsiveness to a deeper reality."[4]

---

[1] Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 7.

[2] Illich, *Vineyard*, 10.

[3] Illich, *Vineyard*, 19.

Hugh of St. Victor believed that the search for oneself must begin with humility. In this context, humility is equated to an openness of thought. He viewed estrangement to the familiar in a positive light. In order to gain wisdom from text, one must be able to separate oneself from the mindset of mass society. A recurrent theme is Illich's passionate plea to prepare the mind for surprise or mystery. "One must be curious, always searching for origin which is the voice of Him who speaks."[5] Being uncomfortable with surprise, all too often we misuse technology to make life more predictable and dull. We fend off feelings of discomfort and pain and therefore minimize sensory experience and as a result negate learning.

For Hugh, enlightenment affects the eyes of the heart. It was Hugh's belief that each individual has three pairs of eyes: the eyes of the body with which one grasps physical things, the eyes of the mind with which one understands the physical reality and what relates them to each other, and the eyes of the heart with which one seeks God. Illich tells us that we have lost this mystical quality in reading text. Reading has become an accumulation of facts rather than a process of knowing oneself. According to Illich and Hugh, reading should be a sensual experience, a process that transforms individuals rather than merely a communication of information.

Placing our faith in institutions rather than connected human potential is one of our most serious threats to faith. Illich implores us to question all institutions that hamper the development of our humanity and that bring us ever deeper into modernized poverty. He entreats us to develop an environment that celebrates our uniqueness. This would involve the development of convivial tools that would result in an expanded commons. Convivial tools are those that give each person who uses them the greatest opportunity to enrich the environment with the fruits of his or her vision. This permits the evolution of lifestyles that give priority to the protection, the maximum use, and the enjoyment of the one resource that is most equally distributed among all people: personal energy under personal control. We must have faith that if we do all that is possible to identify and develop illuminated selves, a vigorous commons results from which creative connections can result.

---

[4] Del Prete, *Thomas Merton*, 9.

[5] "Part Moon, Part Traveling Salesman," transcript, 31.

Illich's works help to clear a way for people to transform themselves and, in the process, society. If one believes in the creativity of the human spirit, there is no need for detailed directives. Society must provide the space for collective action.

> To understand what this means, we must rediscover the distinction between hope and expectation. Hope, in its strong sense, means trusting faith in the goodness of nature, while expectation . . . means reliance on results which are planned and controlled by man. Hope centers desire on a person from whom we await a gift. Expectation looks forward to satisfaction from a predictable process which will produce what we have the right to claim.[6]

Whatever we learn in schools or through other institutional structures has been carefully planned. Learning is managed rather than allowed to happen. One must understand that we are "radically powerless." We have only the ability to celebrate the present. "I know of only one way of transforming us, *us* meaning always those I can touch and come close to, and that's deep enjoyment of being alive at this moment."[7] A healthy society can only be the result of inspired connections.

Following this line of thought regarding the harm in planning, Illich argued that knowledge has been designed and packaged in schools. By describing schooling as a ritual, he draws an analogy between schools and the Church.

> The school system today performs the threefold function common to the powerful churches throughout history. It is simultaneously the repository of the society's myth, the institutionalization of that myth's contradictions, and the locus of

---

[6] Illich, *Deschooling*, 151-152.

[7] Cayley, *Conversations*, 283.

the ritual which reproduces and veils the disparities between myth and reality.[8] Institutions have hindered rather than facilitated our journey toward self-identification as they form barriers between ourselves and reality. Just as we have institutionalized spirituality in the Church, so we have institutionalized learning in the schools. These structures have subverted our perception of ourselves. Society as a whole has become a system in which tools have rendered the senses useless. We use "image and sound consumption in order to anesthetize the pain resulting from having lost reality."[9] For example, Hugh spoke of the eyes of the body, mind, and heart. Life was viewed in a much richer sense. With the advent of body as system, the act of sight becomes nothing more than an act of registration. Our technology denies our senses. Illich describes this unnatural use of tools as "perverse sacramentality."

Although God provided the sacraments as tools to help us do His will, we use technology to recreate the world to our specifications. "This regime has given birth to a society, a civilization, a culture, which, taken together, are the clear inverse of what we read in the Bible, of what is indisputably found in the text of the Torah, the Prophets, Jesus, and Paul."[10] Knowledge as technology is the negation of sacramental, Divine gifts. We must learn once again how to trust in spontaneous social relationships and depend less on the institutions that deter us from finding ourselves. This institutional dependence denies us rich human connections as the commons shrinks. Illich's prophetic analysis of knowledge as unbridled technology seems uncomfortably accurate. Having traced this trend of separation of spirituality and study to the Middle Ages, Illich asks us to again place our faith in the human spirit as we use a sensual praxis to aesthetically formulate convivial tools, not for the sake of the future but in celebration of the beauty of the present.

Although in his earlier discussion of tools, Illich took exception to humanity's increasing arrogance in the manipulation, his more current thought maintains that we have taken our hubris one step further. Not only have we constructed an artificial reality, the tools we use to service these systems have become so distancing that we now work only with symbols and images. Tools no longer have any connection to the body. "Tools are intrinsic to social relationships. Each person relates to society through actions and the tools effectively mastered to carry out those actions. To the degree that one actively masters one's tools, their shape determines his/her self-image."[11]

---

[8] Cayley, *Conversations*, 43.
[9] Illich, "An Address to Master Jacques," 1.
[10] Illich, "An Address to Master Jacques," 1.

Historically, tools were formed by the hands of men and women. Each tool was gendered, serving a specific purpose. Tools took their meaning from their use. In fact, much in society could be understood in light of a culturally created practice of gender--thought, speech, behavior--all created by two completely different creatures with asymmetrical life roles. These life roles, although differing, were complementary. Work centered on the home provided respect for those activities done by both men and women. Gender was more a cultural distinction than biological. With the advent of the industrial age, economic society was born. Wages, paid for work done outside of the home, were usually earned by men. Women became instant losers in the zero-sum mentality of economic competition. Now it made no difference who held the tool, man or women. As the separation of body and tool became universal in the North, the sexist regime was born. There was no gender differentiation. Cultural ties that made each gender special had been erased.

With the new computer technology, even the body has been removed from the tool. We experience life in bytes and megabytes. Tools have been replaced by images and symbols. We no longer know what is real. We have had a complete divorce of the hand and the tool. Illich spoke of a life derived from symbols:

> It's a way of associating with an environment where there is no kiss, there is no hand to be held, there is no great idea generated in dialogue between two people, there is no creativity of a human form. There is no leaf, there is only the graphic

---

[11] Illich, *Gender*, 90.

> of a leaf. So I think that what the computer does is it announces the end of experience and provides an alternative to life.[12]

As importantly, computers have served as Mnemosyne. We have been left with no memory to conjure metaphors. Mnemosyne, Mother of the Muses, is the earliest of the goddesses who provided for the wellspring of remembrance.

> A mortal who has been blessed by the gods can approach Mnemosyne and listen to the Muses sing in their several voices what is, what was, and what will be. Under the protection of Mnemosyne, he may recollect the residues that have sunk into her bosom by drinking from her waters. When he returns from his visit to the spring--from his dream or vision--he can tell what he has drawn from this source. Philo says that by taking the place of a shadow, the poet recollects the deeds that a dead man has forgotten. In this way, the world of the living constantly makes contact with the world of the dead.[13]

Illich and Sanders tell us that modern memory does not derive from this older form of memory but rather from the later Latin work *memoria*. It was only after the alphabet allowed us phonetic transcription that the concept of knowledge, which could be held in the mind as a store, emerged. The oral tradition made no division between recollecting and doing. The pre-alphabetic bard drew on a storehouse of memories to compose a song, poem, or story. This was driven by the rhythm of the lyre or strum of the lute. "Oral transmission of epics ceases with writing, and with it, the dawn of history, fades the idea of memory as the goddess of immortal recollection."[14]

It was not until the Middle Ages that letters created a new type of society. New ways of doing business, nourishing prayer life, and administering justice all developed with the written preservation of the word.

> Trust, power, possession, and everyday status were henceforth functions of the alphabet. The use of documents together with a new way of shaping the written page, turned writing, which in the Early and High Middle Ages had been extolled and honored as a mysterious embodiment of the Word of God, into a constituent element in the mediation of mundane relations.[15]

Oaths were replaced by contracts. Even the sacrament of marriage, once an exchange of sentiment, became a legal commitment. With written text, memory was once removed from experience. With the computer, we are so distanced that life becomes almost unrecognizable.

---

[12] "Part Moon, Part Traveling Salesman," transcript, 31.

[13] Ivan Illich and Barry Sanders, *ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind* (New York: Random House, 1989), 14.

[14] Illich and Sanders, *ABC*, 22.

[15] Illich and Sanders, *ABC* , 32.

In *Vineyard,* we learn of Hugh's recovery of the art of classical memory training that he believed had been neglected. Hugh actually wrote three books on this subject--two for the novice and one for the more mature Brothers. This instruction was based on the Greco-Roman model of the art of memory and involved the construction of a mental palace with many rooms. Each passage to be memorized was marked with an emblem such as a red apple, and at such time when that passage was needed for support in debate, one would have the ability to move quickly from one room to another to retrieve the knowledge needed. In his second book of memory training, *De Tribus,* Hugh reminded one that memory is not to be used for legal attack but rather for contemplation of Holy Scripture.

> My child, Wisdom is a treasure, and thy heart is the place where you want to keep it. . . . There are distinct hiding places for gold, for silver, for gems. You must come to know these different places to recover what you have hidden in them. You must become like the money changer at the fair whose hands speedily move from one satchel to the other, always reading for the right coin.[16]

Hugh's third work was much larger and actually made up of two volumes.

> It contains a complete set of rules for the construction of Noah's Ark in the pupil's heart. . . . In the same way in which Noah saved the animals during the flood, the pupil will preserve his memories in the midst of the sinful world's violent storms.[17]

Whatever new knowledge one picks up in the reading of text can be placed in a specific niche to be reclaimed for later contemplation.

Hugh taught the practice of monastic, commemorative mumbling in a carefully constructed inner space, whose layout was not arbitrarily constructed but revealed the structure of space-time he calls *historia.* Prior to the separation of words in a text, vocalization during reading was necessary for understanding. In this manner, text was not managed or organized; rather, its structure was overlaid onto the architectural edifice for future reference. This led to the practice of rhetoric that relied on such palaces of memory for the non-oral skill of organizing thoughts prior to public speaking.

---

[16] Jerome Taylor, *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts,* translated from the Latin with an introduction and notes (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1961).
[17] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past,* 188.

To suggest such practices today would be to invite ridicule. Why memorize when one need merely store knowledge in a computer? No effort need even be expended on its retrieval as with the flick of the cursor the information flashes before us. Reading as described by Hugh was an adventure to be savored. "I ambulate with him through the espalier of lines on which words are strung up like grapes which I can pick, and from which I am urged to suck the tasty sweetness of wisdom."[18] We find it best to take the path of least resistance. Why waste time? The trip might be painful. We have moved from Hugh's *pagina*, which required one to sense and savor wisdom leading to a clearer knowledge of self, to the text that has been familiar to students from the 13th century to the late 20th century. This medium requires only that we register knowledge and organize it in some fashion in the electronic file that flashes information on a screen and registers it without one's direction.

Content-Sensitive Help

In fact, the less one thinks, the better. Illich refers to this destructive trend as "content-sensitive help." We are encouraged to be passive receptors of information rather than active learners who facilitate connection of knowledge.

In *Mirror of the Past*, Illich addressed the memory of the past, which differs from person to person. This is the memory of culture. Illich defines culture as those practices that seek to preserve the commons and its vernacular elements.

> What else is culture but the frame within which the shadows come back and are enfleshed? . . . Different ages have used different devices to conjure up what has been. Greeks used the lyre, Aztecs the flute, Bushman the drum to make the

---

[18] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past*, 186.

whole body of *mnemosyne* resonate to the rhythms of the past.[19]

In accepting Henri Bergson's premise of life as duration of time and the accumulation of experience, one can only learn through the memory of experience and can only make choices through the imagination of possibilities. Creative evolution depends upon the inventiveness of life and mind. Lacking sensual experience and memory, we are unable to imagine. The theme of this catastrophic change was made evident in *H2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness*, published in 1985.[20] In this book, Illich wrote about the "historicity of stuff" and reflected on how the natural stuffs of our world were losing their imaginative associations and metaphors. This book resulted in a request for Illich to speak to a group in Dallas, Texas. They were planning to construct a lake, fountains, and waterfalls from recycled sewage water. Illich believed that the industrial solvent that Dallas hoped to use in its beautification program might chemically be H_2O, but it had lost its ability to mirror the water of dreams.

> I do believe that in this world into which I see the young generation now moving, it is not only their voice they are losing by imagining themselves along the model of the computer, it is also that they are emerging as a generation rid of stuff. . . . I am saying the deadness which sets in when people have lost the sense to imagine the substance of water, not in its external appearances, but the substance of water, that deadness might be worse for those who live on than the diseases that set in, the AIDS analogues which will set in because there are too many organic phosphate residues. . . . I'm speaking of the deadening of the imagination.[21]

We have so deadened our ways of feeling and doing that we no longer have the ability to create. Although the text had caused us to fatally describe experience, the current concept of life as system and mind as computer leaves no space for imagination. Technology has successfully blocked connection.

Just as importantly, the death of imagination precedes the extinction of understanding of *other* so critical to the celebration of diverse beings. It is only by imagining what you as *other* feel or experience that one can hope to find common ground for community. Within his writing, Illich took us from the need to detach for critical generation of knowledge to the need to integrate and embody human experience, finally reaching the need to respect individual embodied experience of others through imagination. The more diverse and embodied the experiences, the greater the *ability* to imagine how others feel or know. The *desire* to empathize with others is whetted in friendship, and it is through friendship that we arrive at wisdom. During the next decade, friendship would become an extremely important context for knowledge in his writings.

---

[19] Illich, *Mirror of the Past*, 184.

[20] Illich, *H2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1985).

[21] "Part Moon, Part Traveling Salesman," transcript, 27.

CHAPTER 3

FINDING TRUTH THROUGH FRIENDSHIP

But he will have fuller participation of the light of glory who has more charity, because where there is greater charity, there is more desire, and desire in a certain manner makes the one desiring apt and prepared to receive the object desired. Hence, he who possesses the more charity, will see God the more perfectly and will be the more beatified.

St. Thomas Aquinas, 1272

Background 1988-1998

Illich's life continues to be instructive, following those precepts he so ardently espouses. He lives as an independent scholar, with no permanent attachment to any contemporary institution, earning no regular salary. While I visited with him in Bremen, he worked closely with small groups of students. Providing the ultimate open-door policy, students and friends visited and discussed, came and went, always being greeted with the greatest respect. Following his lecture on Friday evenings, attendees were invited to dinner to continue deliberations.

> He speaks, he writes, submitting himself openly to public judgment, but beholden to no institution or movement, answerable to no employer. He has immersed himself in a specific historical tradition, while being acquainted with other, very different traditions. And because he has traveled far into his tradition, has drunk deeply from its wisdom, he is not imprisoned by what passes for a thought paradigm today.[1]

Illich currently spends part of his year as a visiting professor in the Science, Technology, and Society program at Pennsylvania State University, part of his year in a similar role at the University of Bremen, Germany, and part of his year writing in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Although Illich possesses a passport from the United States, he does not claim a country. He has a group of friends to whom he is infinitely loyal and they to him. True to his most foundational thoughts, friendship forms the structure of his life.

---

[1] Lee Hoinacki, "On Reading Ivan Illich" (Bremen, Germany, January 20, 1992), 2. Copy provided by Lee Hoinacki, Bremen, Germany, 16 February 1998.

Illich's best known works written during this decade, *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon* and *In the Mirror of the Past: Lectures and Addresses 1978-1990*, as well as several other lesser known publications and speeches, continue his reflection on how far we have become removed from our senses that provide the path for the unfolding of the self. The greater the illumination of self, the easier the connection to others, just as an illuminated beacon is a more visible destination in the dark. Gifts offered and accepted in a context of friendship and hospitality are always appropriate. Parker Palmer, who writes about incorporating learning into the context of Spirit, tells us that as we listen to each other, we hear various versions of reality, and "as those versions confirm and contradict each other, we move toward a consensus with each other that is more faithful to the reality beyond us."[2] A space for such learning can be provided through hospitality.

> Hospitality is not an end in itself. It is offered for the sake of what it can allow, permit, encourage, and yield. A learning space needs to be hospitable not to make learning painless but to make the painful things possible, things without which no learning can occur--things like exposing ignorance, testing tentative hypotheses, challenging false or partial information, and mutual criticism of thought. Each of these is essential to the obedience of truth.[3]

Silent reading of text moved literacy one step closer to passivity. With the emergence of the alphabet, one had a way of ordering and labeling thoughts so that memorization became less necessary--reading required even less of an energy expenditure. The metaphor of mind as computer took learning to a new level of indifferent programming. Shaping our perception of literacy and, in turn, ourselves, one reduces speech to communication and individuals to systems. The implication presented is that as we move farther from physical experience in literacy, one has greater difficulty in defining self as reality becomes distorted. Individuals are less capable of knowing who they are and what they have to offer in friendship. Similarly, one becomes less able to determine what one needs.

---

[2] Parker Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: A Spirituality of Education* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 94.

[3] Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*, 74.

Illich tells us,

> My own reading and teaching during the last several years was mainly concerned with mid-twelfth-century imagination, perception, conceptions, and fantasy. By interpreting the texts of Hugh of St. Victor, Heloise, Guibert, and Theophilus Presbyter, I tried to grasp the occasional, premature emergence of a kind of assumption whose descendants have become a social reality that we no longer wish away. . . . To each audience I wanted to suggest that only in the mirror of the past does it become possible to recognize the radical otherness of our twentieth-century mental topology and to become aware of its generative axioms that usually remain below the horizon of contemporary attention.[4]

It is only through the concept of *other* that we can imagine and view the multiple faces of the reality.

> As dialogue goes on, a larger truth is revealed, a truth that is not only within us but *between* us. We are not autonomous agents, each with a private world, but are in community with each other. Community begins to emerge as we seek inward nature. But it can grow only as we realize that our created nature calls us into obedient relationship with each other and all that we know; it can grow only as our inward response finds outward manifestation in relationships of dialogue and troth.[5]

Each piece in this collection reflects the thought that if we lose our humanness, we lose the connection of spirit. As senses atrophy from disuse, we no longer live and share in connection but rather manage an existence which is easily extinguished.

Emerging Themes

If technology separates us from nature, learning becomes disconnected as our senses wither from disuse. According to Illich, the answer to this cataclysmic loss lies in the renewal of friendship as the basis for living and learning, which for Illich are one and the same. Friendship provides the basis for the exchange of Divine gifts as well as for a natural limitation of tools. Always placing the needs of others first, we share what is most valuable in our lives (our talents) and defer in our needs to those with whom we live. Both physical space and time must be provided for this exchange as Illich presents the need for "useful unemployment," which provides the time necessary for charitable endeavors in community. Friendship must be the basis for all learning, both as process and as focus in our re-engagement of the real and authentic. This chapter follows the thread of friendship through Illich's work over the years as it becomes the foundation for learning and community.

---

[4] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past*, 10.

[5] Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*, 90.

Friendship as Austerity

Illich discusses friendship throughout his writing, but it was the importance of austerity in friendship that most frequently emerged in his earliest works. *Tools for Conviviality* began such a discourse. This volume contains a historical study of tools and tool use. Illich came to the conclusion that the character of tools today has a direct relationship on personal and social possibilities. He viewed energy and education as tools. With the first, we are moved, and with the other, we are taught.

> Because of the way these tools are designed and operate, privilege, power, and prestige necessarily cluster around a few persons. The many--you and I, the individuals we know--are reduced to stupefaction. And there is no way to remedy this situation short of draconian re-structuring of society's tools.[6]

In this case, friendship suggests the limitations one should put on the production of tools and their use. One must self-limit out of concern for others. Further, we must unite in a political inversion:

> If within the very near future man cannot set limits to the interference of his tools and the environment and practice effective birth control, the next generations will experience the gruesome apocalypse predicted by many ecologists. Faced with these impending disasters, society can stand in wait of survival within limits set and enforced by bureaucratic dictatorship. Or it can engage in a political process by the use of legal and political procedures.[7]

---

[6] Illich, *Tools*, 7.

[7] Ivan Illich, *Tools*, 100.

Although friendship, in this instance, always meant austerity for the sake of a friend, it was often an intentional connection directly related to a political purpose supporting other "friends." In this case *friend* is used in the very liberal sense. A friend is an undifferentiated other to whom I should always defer. Austerity is key to self-limiting behavior.

In much the same way, the article "Death Undefeated" implores those in medicine to not remain detached in the treatment of disembodied systems--managing and optimizing lives. But rather, he asked them to assist us in "a bittersweet acceptance of our precarious existence and subsequent readiness to prepare for our own death."[8] This article was an extension of *Medical Nemesis*. His ruthless examination of the rituals of contemporary healthcare as they treat human systems, ignoring basic human needs and feelings, is also a commentary on friendship. We have moved from medicine, which assisted us through the healing process, to medicalization, which has helped us deny any human pain and even the art of dying, to systematization, which removes us so far from life that our humanity is denied.

> When this situation is widespread, one can justifiably speak of an amortal society. There are no dead around, only the memory of lives that are not there. The ordinary person suffers from the inability to die. In an amortal society, the ability to die fades. The old Mediterranean norm--that a wise person needs to acquire and treasure an *amicus mortis*, one who tells you the bitter truth and stays with you to the inexorable end--calls for revival. And I see no compelling reason why one who practices medicine could not also be a friend--even today.[9]

We must not deny our bodies or pain. Neither can we allow anyone to take those away *from us*. What we can do is to allow one to feel with us and help us deal with the physical and emotional.

---

[8] Ivan Illich, "Death Undefeated,"*The British Medical Journal*, December 1995, 30.
[9] Illich, "Death Undefeated," 30.

Friendship as Guide

Illich comes to a much more connected and relational concept of friendship in his later works. As I read *In the Vineyard of the Text*, I was impressed with his complete identification with Hugh of St. Victor. I thought that he understood every nuance of Hugh's mind, and this was extremely helpful in this research. Many of Hugh's writings are esoteric. Illich, on the other hand, spoke of him as if he were a close friend. He had truly crawled into the medieval monk's mind and viewed the world from that monastic perch. I am not surprised, then, that Illich's ultimate metaphor is friendship, as was Hugh's. "Friendship is the word in Hugh for that love of wisdom which is *sapientail* or tasteful knowledge."[10] Wisdom for Hugh was a sensory experience that illuminated the student. This process drew the student back into himself in such a way that he could not but reflect this pure inner light in such a way that it would affect the other as a friend. Hugh writes on the friendship of wisdom:

> To my dear Brother Ranulph from Hugh, a sinner. . . . Charity never ends. When I first heard this, I knew it was true. But now, Dearest Brother, I have the personal experience of fully knowing that charity never ends. For I was a foreigner and met you in a strange land. But the land was not really strange for I found friends there. I don't know whether I first made friends or was made one. But I found charity there and I loved it; and could not tire of it, for it was sweet to me, and I filled my heart with it, and was sad that my heart could hold so little. I could not take in all there was--but I took as much as I could, and weighed down with this precious gift, I did not feel any burden, because my full heart sustained me. And now, having made the long journey, I find my heart still warmed, and none of the gift has been lost: for charity never ends.[11]

In this passage, Hugh reflected the metaphor of seeking wisdom as journey, wisdom residing in a place in one's heart. Friendship assists us in this pilgrimage. Illich reflected the need for friendship in learning throughout the decades, but the emphasis on connection and support became especially clear in some of his later works:

> But my conviction has only deepened: The time of qualification by curricular attendance, the time of schooling which grew out of the idea of seminary and the *ratio studiorum*, is over. Even now, higher learning depends crucially on hos-

---

[10] Illich, *Vineyard*, 27.

[11] Illich, *Vineyard*, 27.

> pitality and friendship and lifelong personal emulation in those virtues which establish the independent stance of heart and mind on which *studium* . . . depends. . . . Further, the unique view on the current predicament of the world which a rootedness in the Roman Catholic tradition enables us to have can be celebrated with circles of friends . . . and can be celebrated with a scope which is and must forever be out of the purview of those caught within the educational assumption, be they the Pope himself.[12]

As early as *Celebration of Awareness*, Illich stressed the importance of friendship in the development of faith as he addressed the future ministry of the Catholic Church. In the essay entitled "The Vanishing Clergyman," he discussed possible reforms for the priesthood. In describing the shape of the future ministry, he suggested that the ministry should be an exercise of leisure rather than a job.

> The `diaconia' will supplant the parish as the fundamental institutional unit in the church. The periodic meeting of friends will replace the Sunday assembly of strangers. A self-supporting dentist, factory worker, professor, rather than a church-employed scribe or functionary, will preside over the meeting.[13]

This particular essay was especially interesting in its anti-clerical stance. Illich celebrated the fact that the numbers of clergy were decreasing as lay members brought minds less ensconced in institutionalized Catholicism. Connections in friendship replace harsh institutional definitions of "church" in an association of Spirit.

Illich later suggested providing time for friendship and conviviality through useful unemployment as we develop strong communities. To do this, we must appreciate the concept of "use-value." A use-value is something that does not have a monetary value but that has value within itself. Leisure time quite possibly has a great use-value. If it is spent in friendship, developing strong community, it has a great use-value.

> The crisis, then, is the same for all: the choice of more or less dependence upon industrial commodities. *More* dependence means the rapid and complete destruction of cultures which determine the criteria for satisfying subsistence activities. *Less* means the variegated flowering of use-values in modern cultures of intense activity.[14]

Increasingly, Illich speaks of friendship as providing the foundation for learning and community.

---

[12] Illich, "Dear Kelly," (Unpublished essay, 1987), 8.

[13] Illich, *Celebration*, 82.

[14] Illich, *The Right to Useful Unemployment*, 23.

Ivan Illich views life as a spontaneous artistic collaboration among friends. This perspective is organic in that individuals who have defined their sense of self then collaborate in creative living in the space that Illich defines as the commons.

> The commons is that part of the environment that lies beyond a person's own threshold and outside his or her own possession, but to which that person has recognized claim of usage--not for the production of commodities, but to provide for the subsistence of kin.[15]

It is within this commons that gifts or talents are exchanged. Creative connections of self-realized individuals are the ultimate artistic expression. In his introduction to Illich's *Celebration of Awareness*, Eric Fromm wrote of radical doubt as a key element to this life view:

> Radical doubt is a process, a process of liberation from idolatrous thinking, a widening of awareness, of imagination, a creative vision of our possibilities and options. This radical approach does not occur in a vacuum. It does not start from nothing, but it starts from the roots. . . . When we speak of man we speak of him not as a thing but a process, we speak of his potential for developing all of his powers; those for greater intensity of being, greater harmony, greater love, greater awareness.[16]

Just as in a great work of art, the quality of material greatly influences the aesthetics of a creation. So it is true that unless individuals develop their unique gifts, the beauty of organic connections will be inhibited. In this sense, one cannot predict what the end result will resemble. Faith in the beauty of actualized, connected selves provides for a dynamically transformed society.

Illich's writing exposes us to entirely new possibilities. His themes are universal: a concern for one's constant renewal, physically, spiritually, and intellectually. The difficulty in this process lies in seeking and celebrating mystery. The map for our journey is not clear. We limit ourselves when we plan our creative connections rather than trust in the potential of sharing knowledge. We must have faith that if we do all that is possible to develop our illuminated selves, a vigorous commons will provide the ultimate artistic expression. We have only the ability to celebrate the present. One cannot manage this creative process. A collective aesthetic can only be the result of inspired connections in an exchange of gifts.

---

[15] Illich, *The Right to Useful Unemployment*, 18.

[16] Illich, *Celebration*, 8.

This exchange requires obedience, according to Illich. By "obedience," he means

> unobstructed listening, unconditional readiness to hear, untrammeled disposition to be surprised. It has nothing to do with what we call obedience today, something that always implies submission, and ever so faintly connotes the relationship between ourselves and our dogs. When I submit, my heart, mind, and body come to be *below* the other. When I listen unconditionally, respectfully, courageously, with the readiness to take in the otherness of someone. But I renounce searching for bridges between the other and myself, recognizing that a gulf separates us. Leaning into this chasm makes me aware of the depth of the loneliness; but I am able to bear it in light of the substantial likeness between the other and myself. The only thing that reaches me is his word, which I accept on faith.[17]

Obedience comes from the Latin root *audire*, which means "to listen." Obedience to a friend involves a careful listening and responding in a dialogue of found selves. We must be obedient to the truth that is illuminated in others. To be in relationship with others requires that one listen and respond. Paradoxically, obedience to such truth results in a freedom. This is a thought common to both our spiritual and secular cultures.

This is an especially difficult concept for marginalized populations who question whose truth are they being told to obey. For too long, they have listened to other people's "truth" in an obedience that is not freely chosen but rather coerced.

Parker Palmer discusses such a dilemma:

> An abstract idea is a word. Words are spoken by a human voice. When we study an idea, we need first to treat it not as an abstraction, but as a human sound. Our opening question should not be `How logical is that thought?' but `Whose voice is behind it? How can I enter and respond to the relation of that thinker to the world?' These questions do not exclude logic and critical intelligence, but they remind us that true knowing involves more than a disembodied intellect computing data. Knowledge of truth requires a personal dialogue be-

---

[17] Ivan Illich, "The Educational Enterprise in the Light of the Gospel," speech given in Fall 1988, Chicago. Copy provided by Ivan Illich, Bremen, Germany, 16 February 1998.

> tween the knower and the known, a dialogue in which the knower listens to the world with obedience.[18]

This thought asks us to personify all that we know, but in a sense different from animism or anthropomorphism. A self-defined person is indeed "objectified" truth. The term "objectified" is used here not in the sense of a commodified object but rather as truth that is not relative but absolute. This personal mode of knowing, then, becomes closer to reality.

> In a world devastated by the objectification of everything, including ourselves, this `primitive' way of personal knowing may turn out to be quite advanced. Perhaps we are ready now to see the wisdom of treating the known as a living self with whom we need to be in dialogue rather than as an inert thing over which we can exercise our flawed mastery, our fatal control.[19]

Aristotelian thought held that friendship was founded on the four moral virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. One first developed these virtues, and then a moral sense of loving one's neighbor would ensue. Illich believes that we must move backward. From friendship one finds virtue. Keeping one's friend's best interest at heart, we will always arrive at a moral place. In contemplating this thought, I can think of no time when this would not be true.

In so thinking, one places learning into an ethos of friendship. One serves as a friend prior to learning about virtue. A wise person and a virtuous person are, under this assumption, one and the same. A rational discourse *on* virtues no longer qualifies one as learned. One's participation as "friend" does. An interpretation of this thought includes the example of Anna, the Portuguese scientist studying lymphocytes in a cancer laboratory in New York. Anna is introduced to us by Jane Goodfield in her book *An Imagined World.*[20] Anna's relationship to her colleagues *and* to the cells she studied provides quite a contrast to the rationalistic, atomistic vision of scientists and scientific discovery that most of us have. Although we often view scientific research as aggressive, highly competitive contests, Anna referred to it as "a kind of birth." She described emotions such as urgency, intense joy, fear, loneliness, intimacy, and a desire to share related to her research. Reasoned analysis and objective scrutiny engendered passion at times. She felt bound closely to her colleagues by emotion as well as by scientific need. She empathized with those who would one day benefit from her work.

---

[18] Palmer. *To Know as We Are Known*, 64.

[19] Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*, 64.

[20] Jane Goodfield, *An Imagined World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981).

> If scientific activity can flourish in an atmosphere of cooperation and connection and important scientific discoveries can take place when passionate feeling motivates and shapes thought, then surely, it is not necessary for science education to be directed solely toward rationalistic, atomistic goals. And if nurturant capacities and the three Cs of caring, concern, and connection can become goals of science teaching without that subject being betrayed or abandoned, surely they can become the goals of *any* subject.[21]

Finally, one of the trends that Illich perceives in learning is our increasing dependence upon machines rather than upon friends for help. Computer programs serve as the vigilant watchdog. Techniques that could not be learned without some form of doing are now engineered instruction with built-in guidance. We have developed a hiatus between living and doing and learning. Our learning process no longer requires us to think. I believe that one of the most serious implications of this trend is the fact that within the learning process, we not only no longer "do," we no longer are required to seek answers from friends. Help is always within grasp of the cursor. Although prior to this condition of mechanized learning, we trusted in others' gifts, we now trust that machines will find the wisdom we seek. We have identified wisdom with information. Inert descriptor and knowledge is ours via the internet. Although once we had to trust that if we faltered in our journey to wisdom, someone more knowledgeable or gifted in that particular void would help us bridge the gap to illumination, we now have the World Wide Web. How much more comfortable to trust the predictable computer. At no point are we allowed to feel helpless and dependent on another. Self as system interfaces so easily with computer as friend.

---

[21] Jane Roland Martin, *Changing the Educational Landscape: Philosophy, Women, and Curriculum* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 210.

> I do believe that the exhaustion and pollution of the earth's resources is above all the result of a corruption in man's self-image or, in other words, of a regression in his consciousness which leads us to conceive man as an organism, ideally dependent not on direct contact with nature and with other persons, but rather on institutions, their services, and products and goods.[22]

Although allowing for connection in political community has always been an important focus for Illich, I believe that in his later years friendship provided an even greater model for ethos in learning. Illich had always defined life in terms of the ability to maintain relationship. Now he sees friendship as the guide to wisdom. Friendship provides the human face of Truth through which one finds multiple perceptions and fuller perceptions of reality through relationship to others. The world we know cannot speak back to us. We come into a community of mutual knowing through friendships both past and present.

> Each of us can remember his own past. But the older I get, the more I treasure the discrepancies between what is uniquely mine in the past and that which others can share with me. The past that appears in this interstice is that past which can surprise me. For even when we have grown up together and later on recall the same moment that we lived together, my substance that is recalled is frequently not yours. And further, the chords which the past strikes when it comes to me might jar those that respond in your heart. Only years later, I suddenly grasped that when those bells tolled for the wedding, for you they meant death. This is the one reason why I like to reminisce with others: the shoddy evening that made me cringe when I thought of it has put on a festive dress since you told me about it.[23]

---

[22] Illich, "Part Moon, Part Traveling Salesman," transcript, 1.

[23] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past*, 182.

CHAPTER 4

CONSIDERATIONS

> Those things which are in the soul by their essence are known through experimental knowledge, is so far as his acts man has experience of his inward principles.
>
> St. Thomas Aquinas, 1272

What remained clear throughout this study was that Illich's thought did not move from point A to point B. Rather, his reflections deepened as he first contemplated concerns about institutionally generated knowledge, moved to the importance of knowledge connection to perception of self, and finally arrived at friendship as a basis for learning in a relationship to Spirit. He was guided by a clear moral compass that provided a lens for living and experiencing. This lens was provided by the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas and embodied the Catholic tradition of thought which finds truth through active relationship between the knower and the known. Truth is not only sought by the individual, but truth actively seeks out the knowers. What Illich's writings do reflect is a deepening of contemplation regarding education and learning, as well as new thinking that has emerged due to evolving social and technological conditions--something he could not have said then but can say now. This chapter discusses those implications for adult learning that have evolved from these new insights.

It is interesting that Illich's writings are often associated primarily with the field of adult education even as he denies the separation of childhood as an epoch of life. Illich was strongly influenced by the work of Philippe Aries.[1] Aries stated that childhood and its emphasis on family is a modern construct. Prior to the education of children being removed from the home to an institutionalized setting, children were much more accepted as an extension of the community. They learned side by side with family and other members of a community. Childhood did not exist. Learning followed a continuum but, in all instances, was based upon experiences of living and could not be removed from that context. According to Illich, there should not be a distinction between how children and adults learn. This is not to be confused with a distinction regarding developmental levels. Rather, Illich believes that the context for learning should be the same for all ages--that of living an integrated life. Consequently, many of the implications discussed in this section of the paper apply to all ages.

---

[1] Philippe Aries. *Centuries of Childhood : A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Knopf, 1962).

Providing Learning Space

Illich's concern with the provision of a commons where we exchange personal gifts and find a common truth requires that we provide space in which obedience to truth can be practiced. Illich describes three characteristics of space which affect learning: openness, boundaries, and hospitality.

Openness

Creating space for learning involves removing the impediments to learning that we find in and around us. In his work, Illich discussed two types of space necessary for learning. The most obvious is the physical space that must be provided for dialogue. Illich finds the commons, that area that can be used by all, as a fruitful space for dialogue. Such an area is necessary for the survival of the community as a place for discussion in a learning community.

Humility is the space that allows one to pay attention to the "other,"be it student, teacher, or subject. Humility provides one to be open to experience as well as criticism. In discussing monastic reading whose intention is to discover self, Hugh of St. Victor stated,

> The beginning of discipline is humility . . . and for the reader there are three lessons taught by humility that are particularly important: First, that he hold no knowledge or writing whatsoever in contempt. Second, that he not blush to learn from any man. Third, that when he has attained learning himself, he not look down upon anyone else.[2]

This humility involves great courage. One must be brave enough to leave the learning space open and not fill it with the comfort of the known. The first step in finding truth is admitting that it is unknown. Rather than searching for instant answers, Illich tells us that we must view learning as an uncertain journey, an adventure. Keeping the learning space open rather than packing it with our pretense of knowing allows for greater growth.

The latter type of space involves the provision of silence for contemplation and reflection.

> Words so often divide us, but silence can unite. In the silence, we are more likely to sense the unity of truth which lies beneath our overanalyzed world, the relatedness between us and others in the world we inhabit and study. When we emerge from silence with this sense of unity in our hearts, it is easier to speak and hear words of troth.[3]

Illich stresses the importance of habits of *ascesis* that foster contemplation. This includes the difficult work of providing space for silence, which can be so difficult in our world of technographic images and unceasing communication. This silence is essential if one is to allow truth to seek us out. Illich discusses this urgent need to restore the commons of silence that is essential to the emergence of persons.[4]

Boundaries

Illich's extensive discussion of learning space boundaries highlights the importance in Thomasian thought regarding grounded experience. In *H2O and the Waters of*

---

[2] Taylor, *Didascalicon*, 62-63.
[3] Taylor, *Didascalicon*, 81.
[4] Illich, *Mirror*, 47-54.

Forgetfulness, the author discussed how space was created in the past.[5] The founding of ancient cities commenced with the plowing of a sacred furrow that defined its boundary. Discrete space then defined where one dwelled. "Preindustrial societies could not have existed in homogeneous space. The distinction between the outside and inside of the body of the city, of the circle, was for them constitutive of all experience."[6] He extended this concept of grounded experience in a critique of an abstract ecological global discourse in the essay "Declaration on Soil." [7] This article compared the local reality of soil to the unbounded debate regarding ecological threats to life such as global hunger. As experience is informed by tradition and bounded by place, Illich calls for a localized "philosophy of soil" equating living with learning. Experience takes place in a specific locale. Learning space must have definition. Palmer relates this to learning and teaching space:

> The openness of a space is created by the firmness of its *boundaries*. A learning space cannot go on forever; if it did, it would not be a structure for learning but an invitation to confusion and chaos. A space has edges, perimeters, limits. When those boundaries are violated--when the city creeps into the desert, or when we return to the city in body or mind--the quality of space is destroyed. We pay the price of these violations in our own society, deprived of desert knowledge by urban sprawl, by highways penetrating the wilderness, by the omnipresent media with their incessant news of the world. The teacher who wants to create open learning space must define and defend its boundaries with care.[8]

The openness of humility nurtures truth. Like St. Thomas, Illich finds truth to be active. We not only seek truth, but truth seeks us out as well. Although we need to provide space for connection, so too we need to provide places of solitude that allow for contemplation. Illich asks for a return to habits that foster contemplation. This practice is particularly difficult in a world that wants to fill every space in our lives with images and sounds. Illich understands the importance of solitude. During particularly difficult times in his life, he retreated to places of physical isolation that provided such space.

---

[5] Illich, *H2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness.*, 7.
[6] Illich, *H2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness*, 7.
[7] Illich, "Declaration on Soil," (Unpublished essay, 1990).
[8] Palmer, *To Knowa as We Are Known*, 72.

> The openness of such space--which is at first appealing to our jangled minds--soon becomes a threat. As the clutter falls away, we realize how much we depend on clutter to keep our minds employed, to make them feel masterful. We do not want to face the barrenness that comes when our man-made structures fail, so we run toward distraction.[9]

However, although such open space provides for the illumination of truth, so does it allow untruth to emerge. Solitude can be a particularly painful place.

Hospitality

Hospitality is also necessary in a learning space to provide comfort for those enduring the pain of discovering truth. "Hospitality means receiving each other, our struggles, our newborn ideas with openness and care. It means creating an ethos in which the community of troth can form, the pain of truth's transformations are borne."[10] Illich believes that we have distorted the concept of hospitality from the provision of a space that supports one as one experiences pain to the provision of a place that helps one avoid pain and, therefore, subverts the journey to truth.[11] Learning relies on the hospitality of the teacher who supports us in many of the painful experiences of life. As importantly, learning depends on "the hospitality of a teacher who has a fruitful friendship with the subject and who wants students to benefit from that friendship as well."[12]

Vernacular Knowledge

Another example of Illich's transformed thought would be his discussion of culture. A traditional definition of the term "culture" is provided by *Webster's New World Dictionary*: "the concepts, habits, skills, arts, instruments, institutions, etc. of a given people in a given period; civilization." This is the culture studied by Franz Boas, Gregory Bateson, and Margaret Mead. Illich believes that we must now look at culture in a much broader sense. He defines culture as those actions taken to preserve vernacular lifestyles. Those lifestyles that are rooted in place and whose practice protects the commons and one's ability to develop and share individual potential in an austere manner. Vernacular culture reflects reality through local experience and supports the power of sustainable living. Illich refers to this as an ethos, and he provides an explanation:

---

[9] Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*, 73.
[10] Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*, 74.
[11] Illich, "Hospitality and Pain," (Unpublished essay, 1987, copy provided by Ivan Illich, Bremen, Germany, 16 February 1998.
[12] Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*, 104.

> These ways may have been vastly different from one another, but each was rooted, sustained, and perpetuated through its respective material culture. Each ethos, which means gain or way of life, shaped all human actions to a certain taste. These exercises of common sense, decency, fairness, and styles in the arts of cooking, suffering, and surviving provided the seedbed for a set of virtues culminating in the principal one: love.[13]

Technology has virtually destroyed this mileau that has been generated by human action and has replaced it with a technogenically standard environment. Specific place that provides unique experience for individuals is important in Thomist thought. Experience is rooted, and although truth is common to all, individuals experience this truth in varied ways. Humanity is not generic. Life provides unique relationships through which we might learn about self. These relationships must be respected in one's learning experience.

Embodied Experience

Charlene Spretnak has addressed embodied experience in her book *The Resurgence of the Real: Body, Nature, and Place in a Hypermodern World.*

> It is painfully obvious that modern thinking emphasizes certain things but forcibly ignores or devalues others, including quite basic elements of life.
> . . . Modern life promised freedom from the vagaries of the body, the limits of nature, and the provincial ties to place. The body came to be seen as a biological machine, the natural world as a mere externality in modern economics, and the sense of place as a primitive precursor to cosmopolitan sophistication.[14]

---

[13] Illich, "Philosophy...Artifacts...Friendship," 1987, 3.

[14] Spretnak, *The Resurgence of the Real*, 2.

Spretnak's book is an optimistic documentation of how the *real* is actually emerging in spite of technology. She addressed the need for us to make space so that this can continue. She discussed the resurgence of the real in terms of the body, nature, and place, citing emergence of research on the self-healing body and the reassertion of place (referring to it as love of one's ecosocial community) that lies behind the scores of independence efforts in recent years.

> By "body" I mean the unified bodymind; by "nature" I mean not a scientifically theorized system or a culturally perceived looming threat, but our physical context, from which our bodies are not separate; by "place" I mean the bioregion, the physical site of community and personal unfolding.[15]

Spretnak believed that the deep structure of our age is not economism or technocracy but rather modernity, although she views both of these elements as aspects of the all-encompassing phenomenon of modernity. The basic tenet of such an era is the repression of the real. Economics fragments our lives so as to make it appear as some type of inertial force that we find difficult if not impossible to define. This results in a belief that the modern condition is inevitable rather than the result of choices.

I believe that Illich would agree that we can dismantle this infrastructure of modernity through different choices than are currently being made. Two of the corrective efforts suggested by Spretnak and Illich involve the need for "relocalization," which nurtures a sense of place (community, bioregion, and region) as a defense against the homogenizing effects of mass culture.

Our technology allows us to remove ourselves from the real through digital learning, transportation that distances us from the journey, and mind-altering drugs that anesthetize our pain and depression. I believe that, to a great extent, this is what has led to the explosive incidents of violence, particularly in our schools. Children who are shooting other children are not doing so with the understanding that they are violating lives. They are under the assumption that they are taking out their frustrations on images that will reappear shortly after their rage has passed. Those whom they kill are nothing more than the disembodied relationships presented to them in chat rooms or on the television screen. We no longer know what is real, particularly the young who have been inundated with this disembodying technology. "A flat, shallow play of rapidly changing sounds and images becomes the hypermodern child's field of consciousness."[16]

---

[15] Spretnak, *The Resurgence of the Real*, 4.

More importantly, in an inappropriate use of technology, we have lost our sense of selves. I believe that the perspective technology provides for us--"body as system"--goes well beyond "humanity as needy." One no longer needs or seeks learning. Inputs will be provided for a non-self in the construct of content-sensitive help, the example Illich provides for learning that requires no thinking. Individuals as systems "function" and are vulnerable only to the "fatal errors" of e-mail as they seek to "communicate" from transmitters of the personal computer. One might ask if an autonomous self capable of the act of dying even exists. Illich stated:

> The ability to die one's own death depends on the depth of one's embodiment. Medicalization spelled dependence, not disembodiment. Disembodied people are those who now think of themselves as lives in managed states--like RAM drive on their personal computer. Lives do not die; they break down. You can prepare to die--as a Stoic, Epicurean, or Christian. But the breakdown of a life cannot be imagined as a forthcoming intransitive action. The end of life can only be postponed. And for many, this managed postponement has been lifelong; it is an uninterrupted memory. They know that a life began when their mother observed a fetus on the ultrasound screen. A life, they were then an object of environmental, educational, and biomedical health policies. Today, it is concreteness that is the major obstacle to a bittersweet acceptance of our precarious existence and subsequent readiness to prepare for our own death. . . . There are no dead around; only the memory of lives that are not there.[17]

The only way that we can survive this radical disconnection from our "real" selves is to view learning much as Hugh did in his Parisian monastery of the 12th century. Learning is the unfolding of self, outside of mediating institutions. We must escape the new technologies of thinking that are promulgated as progress as they deliver us from the "'old ways,' which are, of course, embedded in religion, community, tradition, culture, the perspective of elders, and a moral, reciprocal relationship with nature."[18]

---

[16] Spretnak, *The Resurgence of the Real,* 117.

[17] Illich, "Death Undefeated,"30.

Discovering our authentic selves is only part of the equation. Once we view the personal gifts of ourselves and others, we must provide the physical space and time to exchange these gifts in the formation of organic community. Thus the foundation of learning is friendship.

Such a basis for learning is presented in Edith Cobb's *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood*, first published in 1977.[19] Cobb was an amateur naturalist, a mother and grandmother, and a student and longtime friend of Margaret Mead. Cobb saw that a child's cognitive processes are integrative acts of self and environment.

> A child moves not *away* from a relationship to an autonomous state of the lone individual, but rather moves *into* a cosmological exploration of the immediate environment and the perception of an ever-increasing complexity and inclusiveness in the structure of *gestalten*. The experience of childhood is an intersection of biology and cosmology, as body and universe are engaged in a harmoniously ongoing process. In perceiving the harmony of body and nature, the child perceives pre-verbally the logic of relationships, the beginning of physiological wisdom.[20]

Cobb determined that scientific discourse depersonalizes relations with humans and nature. She concluded that the ability to transcend adaptive behavior that has been too narrowly confined to scientific principles depends on cultivating "compassionate intelligence," a process of identification in which humility is the creative tool. I would suggest that our over-emphasis on scientific, rational thought has allowed us to transcend natural limits that compassionate intelligence would help us rediscover.

Illich distinguishes between education, which represents someone else's version of reality, and learning, which is one's attempt to discover what is personal reality. One should not attempt to educate. Education is what one imposes upon another in an attempt to address the needs of that other. An educated person is not one to be admired but pitied. Our current view of an educated person is one who represents a distorted version of someone else's truth. Rather, one seeks truth through learning. This truth, as it is the illumination of a transcendent Spirit, is discovered in unique journeys and reflects diverse human identities. Knowledge is what we access through our senses. Understanding allows one to connect those experiences in meaningful ways. Wisdom is the ability to view all knowledge within a transcendent whole, involving the intuitive sense of being as one experiences truth. This is what Illich discusses in learning as the journey in discovering the self.

---

[18] Illich, "Death Undefeated," 119.

[19] Edith Cobb, *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1993).

[20] Spretnak, *Resurgence of the Real*, 121.

Eduard Lindeman addressed this need for holism in learning half a century before Illich: "Specialists can contribute to the increase of wisdom (as distinguished from knowledge) by dealing with parts in such a manner that they become useful in explaining wholes."[21] Lindeman believed that specialists are those who had been *miseducated*, as they are unable to view knowledge in an integration of life. He anticipated Illich in cautioning against dependence upon experts. Lindeman stated that specialists enter our lives when meaning is confused or lost as we attempt to take in too much.

> The expert cuts the cord of uncertainty; he speaks as one having authority, and we, having transferred decision to him, act upon his word and thereby achieve the adjustment. But alas, this is merely a superficial aspect of the true adjusting process. When next we confront a similar difficulty, another expert will need to be consulted; in the end, if this were the essence of expert service, life would become a chronic succession of consultations in the presence of specialists.[22]

Lindeman warned of the highly developed means of communication that specialists use if we question their authority in the context of a more holistic version of life. Like Illich, Lindeman saw rapid forms of transportation and communication as forms of social control that make it easier for single authorities or institutions to regulate us.

---

[21] Eduard Lindeman. *The Meaning of Adult Education* (New York: New Republic, Inc. 1926), 84.
[22] Lindeman, *The Meaning of Adult Education*, 86.

> Our personalities can be redeemed if we insist upon a proper share in the solution of problems which specifically concern us. This means giving more attention to small groups, it means as much decentralization, diversity, and local autonomy as is consistent with order. Indeed, we may very well sacrifice order, if enforced externally, for valid difference.[23]

This concern for dependence upon experts was discussed in John McKnight's *The Careless Society*.[24] McKnight showed how communities erode when we question our ability in the face of professionalized services. Rather than depending upon our individual and collective strengths, we rely on *expert* knowledge, often with devastating results. We find solutions in voices foreign to our experience and abdicate responsibility for solutions to our problems as we open ourselves to external control. Professionals help us because we are needy.

In an eloquent final chapter, McKnight described professionals as coming in the guise of servants. Although advertising themselves as *servants*--those who serve the incompetent--they have, in reality, no interest in seeing us grow. Rather they profit when we are diminished in the shadow of their superior and incomprehensible languages. McKnight asks us to help as friends, knowing one another's strengths and supporting each other in growth, being comfortable in receiving our gifts as well as offering theirs. "In our time, professionalized servants are people who are limited by the unknowing friendlessness of their help. Friends, on the other hand, are people liberated by the possibilities of knowing how to help each other."[25]

In another sense, Illich's voice was rehearsed in Lindeman's emphasis on embodied and grounded experience in learning:

> In conclusion, opportunities for turning experience to account educationally will be multiplied if we delimit the area of our functions as well as the size of our problems. Experience, the stuff out of which education is grown, is after all a homely matter. The affairs of home, neighborhood, and local community are

---

[23] Lindeman, *The Meaning of Adult Education*, 89.

[24] John McKnight. *The Careless Society: Community and Its Counterfeits* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

[25] McKnight, *The Careless Society*, 179.

> vastly more important educationally than those more distant events which seem to be so enchanting."[26]

Lindeman, in this instance, refers to education not as what is housed in separate buildings, but the intentional learning that is better accessed through living.

Defining Truth

For Illich, truth is the unknown that humanity constantly attempts to know. Having no language for that which we do not know, discussion about it becomes difficult, and acceptance of the uncertainty makes us uncomfortable. Although truth in this sense is not relative, it shows itself to individuals in discrete revelations. What is truth? One knows it as it is revealed, not before. Truth does not evolve; it is absolute. It is the stream that connects us all but emerges in various forms. Only individuals who open themselves to this discourse of Spirit know truth and only in that moment. The Christian truth is personal and revealed through human sensory experiences. Truth is not passive but actively seeks the knower if we but listen. However, we must not become obsessed with our own seeking but rather remain open to the surprise of revelation. Truth is revealed not only within us but between us as we share experiences in friendship and community. Learning through experience and language individually and collectively provides illumination.

The South African term "ubuntu" refers to such a relationship--"I am because *we* are." This thought reflects the notion that a person is a person through other human beings but not at the expense of denying gifts of self. Susan Lynham applies such a concept to leadership in South Africa, and just as Illich suggests a base of Spirit as an integrator of life spheres, so Lynham suggests a spiritual base for leadership in allowing for imaginative solutions to societal problems through organic organizations.[27]

---

[26] Lindeman, *The Meaning of Adult Education*, 89 .

[27] Susan Lynham, *Towards Effective Ethical and Enduring Leadership in a New South African Era: Sustaining South African Organizations through Major Changes and Challenge*, (Thesis, College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, MN, 1992).

Illich's insistence on embodied learning, the necessary connection of learning and doing. So one can only attain wisdom or connection to the authentic self through embodied learning.

This means that we must increase our contact with the natural and choose our metaphors for learning from that milieu. Illich is saddened that we have chosen our metaphors from a mechanistic, computerized place. We need to reconnect to the vernacular culture so as to distinguish the real *Self* from the *self* that immersion in technological systems would have us find. This unnatural self, easily managed and commodified, diminishes life. Using metaphors from nature is the only way we can effect organic social change. How would the metaphor of streams shape our thoughts differently from the metaphor of roads? How different the choices when thought is not placed in the language of binary systems so common in Western thought. Only by noting the interdependence and connection that is so representative of nature can we open the space for community. Only by acknowledging the intrinsic worth and gifts that we can exchange in community can we separate ourselves from the dependence upon service institutions that have rendered us impotent.

Specifics about how such learning in a vernacular culture looks would include functioning as "friend," automatically self-limiting out of respect for the needs of others, and providing for a natural exchange of ideas. Small, ad hoc groups would provide for flexible learning groups. Sensory experience (both pleasant and painful) is the basis for learning. Manipulation of tools used in the learning process is essential. As strongly as Illich advocates for disciplined alienation from ideologies, he pleads for the re-embodiment of *real* in the learning process. Only by cultivating our senses can we find our authentic selves, ignoring the concept of *self* as social construction that we have been sold by the postmodern era.

Beware Curriculum

The 1960s and 1970s, when Illich was most widely read, can be characterized as a time for renewal. Illich was not alone in envisioning the demise of educational institutions. Many believed that the curriculum would disappear once students were put in charge of their own learning. I believe the point that many missed (and are still missing) in such a discussion is the fact that curriculum need not be compulsory and does not require that some knowledge be essential for all for its survival. Curriculum can outlive schools. Jane Roland Martin reminded us: "So long as people try to educate one another, or even simply themselves, decisions about what is to be learned will remain a central fact of life."[31] Culture speaks loudly. It is the culture of economics that Illich sees being reflected in mindless learning--learning which is not embedded in truth. It becomes important to develop the strength to pull back from our economic cultural assumptions on the journey to illumination. Knowledge generated in a moral vacuum is worthless at the very least, blasphemous in its unbridled use.

Probably one of the most far-reaching implications has to do with Illich's recommendation to do research *on* education and not *in* the field. Researchers following conventional research methodology are eager to measure that which can be quantified. They seldom question whether efficiency in a particular area is advisable. Initiatives that connect us to vernacular values encounter resistance. Our obsession with the perfection of technique overwhelms and most frequently takes precedence over those that question our very foundations of learning. This broader organic focus would also need to integrate the spheres of education, health, welfare, politics--all areas of life that have become disembedded. Our obsession with research on technique as it affects efficiency prevents us from focusing on critical and ethical issues.

---

[31] Jane Roland Martin, *Changing the Educational Landscape: Philosophy, Women, and Curriculum* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 171.

CHAPTER 5

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

> He brought things into being in order that His goodness might be communicated to creatures and be represented by them. And because his goodness could not be adequately represented by one creature alone, He produced many and diverse creatures so that what was wanting to one in the representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another.
>
> St. Thomas Aquinas, 1272

Throughout this investigation I have provided an account of Ivan Illich's written works and recent thinking. I have tried to provide as objective an account as possible. As Illich believes that individuals reflect truth in different ways, I believe it is important to discuss those issues raised by Illich that especially reflect my personal experience.

Friendship as an Exchange of Gifts

As a friend, I am a selfish person. I cherish each and every one of my friends for their uniqueness, and I savor their specialness to a point of indulgence. My friends range in age from the newly arrived to those finding closure in their earthly experience; male and female; those whom society has defined as intellectually gifted to those whom it has defined as mentally deficient; those who love to cook, as I do, to those who will not step foot in the kitchen but always bring their sense of humor to our gatherings.

Perhaps this appreciation of diverse gifts emerges from more than twenty years of working in the field of special education. Although the institutional programs viewed my students as having special needs, I saw them as having special gifts. Yet those of us who are not quite as challenged often sell ourselves short. What could we possibly have to offer? Our institutions, which teach us to strive for and value sameness, leave little room for specialness. Workshops and seminars admonish us to *tolerate* difference. As we globalize and homogenize, we lose the sense of ourselves. It is much easier to manage gifts when they are all the same. Gifts that have been commodified are more easily defined and manipulated. As does Illich, I believe that beauty, mystery, and surprise, once very much a part of living, have been diminished through our loss of self, rootedness, and community. Illich has developed an organic creativity whose dynamics lead to the ultimate aesthetic--a thriving commons rich in diverse gifts. It is important for each of us to be willing to share as well as to accept those gifts that reflect our illuminated selves through acts of friendship.

Redefining the Educated Person

Illich finds all formal education stifling as institutional agendas take precedence over the unfolding of individual gifts. I would suggest that this is especially true for women. Reflecting Illich's thoughts on gender, I would like to look at knowledge in light of Western society's division of labor. I agree with Illich's claim that wage labor based outside of the home resulted in the constitution of masculinity/femininity as unequal opposites. The distinction of *work* and *shadow work* made by Illich parallels the disembedding of emotion from knowledge. The Enlightenment view of knowledge depends upon a similar separation--the separation of reason and body, reason and passion, thought and imagination, and fact and value. In Western societies that reflect this disjuncture, some people engage only or primarily in abstract thought, and others take care of the necessities arising out of embodied existence, including childbearing and rearing.

> Philosophers have argued that engagement in such activities disqualifies one from the life of reason. No true knowledge can arise out of these activities, and, indeed, involvement in them impedes or clouds true thought. They produce biases that must be controlled for. Hence, only those who can separate themselves from embodiment and reproduction can be rational producers of true knowl-

edge.[32]

Illich's premodern distinctions between household/private world and the public world are transformed in modern societies. The public now includes the economy, the state, and knowledge/culture production as life spheres become disembedded.

> The household remains the locus of passion, feeling, the concrete and particular, the subjective, the mortal, the familial and kinship. These qualities are posited as opposite and inferior to reason, the abstract, the universal, objective, immortal (soul and/or knowledge), and the productive employment of labor or thought. Women can only partake of the higher order of things to the extent that we can divorce ourselves from embodied existence. Since "nature" is more fully present in us (we are potentially pregnant and reproductive beings for a long time), such separation is more difficult (and always more suspect) for women than for men.[33]

The contaminating differences of embodied knowledge and emotional connection in this discussion of knowledge are located in women. To be educated they must give up their own way of experiencing and looking at the world, thereby alienating themselves from themselves.

Illich's validation of embodied learning, imagination, intuition, and the emotional connection redefine the learned person. A learned person is one who celebrates self in connection with others. This is especially liberating for women who have for too long attempted to construct knowledge according to the male model. In such a scenario, both men and women lose. By discrediting embodied experience we deny our *selves*. Education, more than producing addicted consumers, produces alienated humanity. Philosopher Virginia Held stated,

> To continue to build morality on rational principles opposed to the emotions and to include women among the rational will leave no one to reflect the promptings of the heart, which promptings can be moral rather than merely instinctive. To simply bring women into the public and male domain of the polis will leave no one to speak for the household.[34]

---

[32] Jane Flax, "Responsibility without Grounds," *Rethinking Knowledge: Reflections Across Disciplines*, eds. Robert Goodman and Walter Fisher (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 158.

[33] Flax, "Responsibility without Grounds," 159.

[34] Virginia Held, *Feminist Morality: Transforming Culture, Society, and Politics* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 48.

While I have suggested that assimilation into the educational system is especially harmful for women, this is true for all who do not reflect the Western ideal of rational man. Richard Rodriguez has written a haunting documentation of his alienation of self in the course of his educational process.[35] This book is the story of a Mexican - American who begins his schooling in Sacramento, California, knowing just fifty words of English and concludes his university studies in the reading room of the British Museum. Rodriguez pays a high cost for his academic success--painful alienation from his past, his parents, and his culture. Rodriguez's educational autobiography documented the divorce of mind from body and of reason from emotion. The result is the ultimate alienation of self. Just as industrialization invited us to make the natural environment to our specifications, so education asks us to reproduce our *selves* to the Western model of an *educated* person.

> Our world is on the brink of nuclear and/or ecological disaster. Efforts to overcome these problems, as well as the related ones of poverty and economic scarcity, flounder today under the direction of people who try hard to be rational, objective autonomous agents but, like Plato's guardians, do not know how to sustain human relationships or respond directly to human needs. Indeed, they do not even see the value of trying to do so.[36]

In encouraging ourselves to be open to what is greater than we are, we allow for the surprise and mystery that accompanies the journey that is life. Illich advocates for living and experiencing, not planning, managing, consuming, interfacing, fragmenting, or disembedding. The search for wisdom is the search for wholeness, a process that continues throughout our lives.

We must bring moral theory into the discourse of learning. This cannot be a disembodied, rational dialogue, but rather one that respects individual experience as well as individual austerity. This implies respect and obedience to each other as friends. We cannot disembed moral thought from learning any more than we can disembed various life spheres from living. Illich calls us to honor the natural, the sensual, the intuitive in living as we celebrate the mystery of being.

---

[35] Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (New York: Bantam Books), 1982.

[36] Martin, *Changing the Educational Landscape*, 203.

Relation of Self to Particular Others

Illich's placement of learning into a context of embodied experience and connected friends differs greatly from the standard moral theory that asks us to generalize abstract assumptions about "economic man." Just as Illich's learning is embodied and embedded in a life that integrates the public and private, so is the morality in which learning is couched. Illich believes that learning necessarily involves the discovering of self and a sharing of this discovery in an ethos of friendship. Standard moral theory also advocates sharing self but with a universal other--an abstract, disembodied humanity. This ignores the realm of relationship with embodied, particular others; family, friends, group associations, and grounded connections are intentionally denied in an objectified morality so as not to contaminate a generalized, reasoned connection. This flies in the face of much female experience, which is filled with actual relationships and embodied experience.

The moral theory in which Illich couches learning honors the real. Individuals live a myriad assortment of roles--child, mother, friend, teacher--resulting in a stunning array of self and equally stunning and complex human connections. In honoring connection to particular others as opposed to connection with a universal group of rational beings, we validate not only grounded experience but also the experience of most women. Reconceptualizations concerning the relation between reason and emotion, the integration of public and private, and the concept of a self in relationship to particular others transform moral theory and provide an opportunity to celebrate uniqueness. For those in society whose voices have differed from that of the universal being, this comes as good news.

Reconciling Vernacular Experience with Universal Reflection

Throughout this project I have had difficulty with the fact that Illich advocates for the vernacular--that which is grounded and embodied--yet frequently emphasizes distanced contemplation. Insight regarding what appears to be a discrepancy in thought might be provided in looking at not what Illich is but rather what he is not. It is impossible to define or label Illich, as it is impossible to define or label any individual. This paper has merely provided a narrative of his experience and resulting works. However, it is possible to discuss those views that differ from his and, therefore, provide a comparison.

As has been stressed throughout, Illich uses the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas as a lens for interpreting experience. Foundational to this thought is the fact that God or Spirit is unknowable. We, as humans, must therefore allow for mystery and surprise in our lives. Although God is unknowable, truth is a reflection of the Divine, and this is what we attempt to find throughout life. Although God is absolute, individuals find various paths to truth. Truth itself, as a Divine creation or reflection, remains constant. When Illich tells us that philosophy is ancillary, I believe he refers to the fact that truth is not purely philosophical but rather "philosophical-theological."[37] In this respect, creations have Divine essences that can be brought to mind through thought. All essence is a reflection of Spirit. Reality is Spirit-based. Although it is impossible to know this Spirit, our journey in life provides us with opportunities to come as close as is possible in human experience as we actively search for truth. All natural creation is Divinely thought and so provides doors to truth.

This idealistic base completely defies those philosophies that have provided a base for modern thought. Industrialization encouraged a highly realistic and pragmatic basis for living. The scientific realists placed an emphasis on physical comfort and trusted only in that which could be measured. Materialism provided the greatest reality for such thinkers. Pragmatists also found reality in that human restructuring of experience. Knowledge for them came solely through the senses, but such knowledge was thought to contribute to a betterment of the human condition and in no way provided spiritual growth. Over the decades, we have become increasingly comfortable with such thought.

---

[37] Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, 50.

Existentialists such as Jean Paul Sartre started in agreement with Thomist thinking: things have an essential only insofar as they are fashioned by thought. However, Sartre continued, there exists no creative intelligence that could have designed humanity and all natural things. This school of thought believes that there is no such thing as human nature because there exists no God to think it creatively. This reality is humanly created and so can be known protecting one from surprise and mystery.

So for Illich, there must be a localization of existing things in knowing them as they provide our unique and diverse experiential paths to a Divine truth. Creation is not only a reflection of God but provides a window to reality for humanity. Further, humanity is in a position not only to know things (knowledge) but also to understand the relationship between things (understanding). In other words, over and above our spontaneous perception of things, we can have knowledge by means of judgments and reflections as we place knowledge in a context of Spirit (wisdom).

I believe that for Illich the vernacular provides the connection to natural creation as we experience what has been thought by God. Each individual experiences life uniquely. Vernacular provides the location for such. Although vernacular knowledge provides the grounding for reflection, it is the disembodied reflection that provides for wisdom as Illich describes it. St. Thomas details such levels of thought: "the lowest, the knowledge of God as He is active in creation; the second, the recognition of God as mirrored in spiritual beings; the third and loftiest, the recognition of God as the unknown."

It is my interpretation that Illich believes, as did St. Thomas, that vernacular or grounded experience provides a basis for knowing Spirit who creates all. However, individuals must move beyond understanding how such experience moves one closer to truth. It is the distanced thought, also described by Illich, that allows one to better grasp such truth. But one must engage in such a search, accepting that one will never know all.

Although Illich is extremely comfortable accepting whatever mystery awaits us in life, he has repeatedly searched for a place from which to contemplate grounded experience. The beauty of Thomist thought is that this higher level of meditative experience can take many forms and so leaves numerous doors open in the search for truth. Vernacular experience provides the curiosity for truth. One must take contemplation of such experience to a more disembodied place. Such is my reconciliation of Illich's emphasis on vernacular knowing and distanced reflection. Although leading a somewhat transient life, Illich is very comfortable localizing experience wherever he resides and contemplates this human experience on a higher level.

Although such acceptance of the unknown is difficult for most, the *hope* of which Illich speaks provides comfort for those weary of the search. Hope affirms that there exists an unknowable Spirit who beckons. So although grounded human experience (vernacular) is necessary, it is not enough. We must place such experience in a distanced perspective in our search for Spirit. Knowing where we are is partly a function of knowing where we are not.

I believe that it is this idealistic grounding of knowledge in Spirit that has caused Illich to often be dismissed. Being much more comfortable with a controlled and managed known, a humanly constructed reality seems more approachable and easily explained. Life according to Illich is rich but requires a great deal of effort and comes with no guarantees.

Defining Education

Flannery O'Connor, a well-known writer who was greatly influenced by her Roman Catholic faith, spoke in a letter of encouragement to a friend of the development of individual potential as an openness to Spirit:

> As I see it, we all have some innate capacity we use or more innate responsiveness than we use. . . . I daresay no one of us is free of these impediments to responsiveness. All education is a matter of getting rid of them. Some of them are conscious and some unconscious. The wrong kind of education can impose them. The reach may remain the same but we never reach the end of our individual reach."[38]

Here, O'Connor speaks of education not as something which takes place in buildings isolated from life, but rather those intentional experiences one chooses to illuminate self. This incorporates formal as well as informal educational experiences.

In this sense I, too, have faith in organized learning groups, some of which are housed within institutions. In the course of this doctoral program, I have connected with many inspired individuals I might not have met had we not gravitated to this organized instruction. That which I have experienced has helped me to discover innate qualities as well as to enhance my connection to others. I have started to discover *self* as well as *other* and have learned to minimize impediments to creative evolution through friendship to each. Two factors make this somewhat different from the educational prisons of which Illich speaks. First, I chose to participate in this experience. Unlike the compulsory education to which others are exposed, this was the result of free choice. Further, I have learned to question institutional agendas and ideologies as I place knowledge in context of truth. Reflection allowed me to recognize what resonated Spirit.

I believe that what Illich abhors in today's compulsory education is the fact that coerced institutional education is planned and packaged for standardized groups. John McKnight characterized present institutions as the way educators often remove young people from the ability to be surprised. Educators rarely allow people to find themselves and develop unique talents, instead asking each to fit into standardized diminished selves--one size fits all.

---

[38] Fitzgerald, *Flannery O'Connor*, 48.

The Christian truth that Illich advocates is universal but not objective in the sense that it is "out there." Parker Palmer describes such:

> Instead, truth is personal, and all truth is known in personal relationships. Jesus is a paradigm, a model of this personal truth. In him, truth, once understood as abstract, principled, propositional, suddenly takes on a human face and a human frame. . . . Indeed, if truth is personal, then creeds and institutions are only the objectified shells of the truth-seeking life that pulses in every human heart. We will find truth not in the fine points of our theologies or in organizational alliances but in the quality of our relationships--with each other and the whole created world.[39]

This personal truth of Christianity is not just an epistemology but rather a way of living. For Illich, knowing is based upon intentional living and learning from relational experience to both Spirit and friends. Amen.

Illich's main theme has always been consistent--humanity's hubris in assuming that one can plan life.

> Classical man was aware that he could defy fate-nature-environment, but only at his own risk. . . . Contemporary man goes further: he attempts to create a world in his own image, to build a totally man-made environment, and then discovers that he can do so only on the condition of constantly remaking himself to fit it.[40]

Although Illich's message is clear, it is not easy to accept. Our only locus of control in life is the ability to change our perspective. We are, in Illich's words, "radically powerless" and in that acceptance lies our "power." Power is actually the relinquishment of control. Our only power is choice. This is a dissertation of the obvious, which we ignore at our own peril. For too many years, Illich's idealistic message of convivial but austere lives was too painful for a population who sought to defy limitation and thrived on manipulation. We are a people who are only comfortable with outcomes we have planned and managed, rather than anticipating whatever surprise or mystery awaits. We strive for safety, prosperity, comfort, long life, and dullness. A people of faith we are not. Our economic focus based on scarcity leads us to view each other as needy rather than gifted. We diagnose deficits rather than celebrate unique talents. No wonder, rather than savoring the present, we look to the future with great cynicism. We don't live; we exist. And considering the manner that we have managed, even that is in doubt. It is for this reason that we must revisit Illich's thoughts.

---

[39] Fitzgerald, *Flannery O'Connor*, 48.
[40] Illich, *Deschooling*, 106.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aries, Philippe. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. New York: Knopf, 1962.

Bergson, Henri. *Creative Evolution*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1911.

Cayley, David. *Ivan Illich in Conversation*. Concord, Ontario, Canada: Anansi Press, 1992.

Cobb, Edith. *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood*. Dallas: Spring Publication, 1993.

Del Prete, Thomas. *Thomas Merton and the Education of the Whole Person*. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1990.

Durant, Will. *The Story of Philosophy*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1926.

Dudan, Barbara. *The Woman Under the Skin*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Evans, Joseph W. "Jacques Maritain." In *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 3rd ed. New York: Macmillan, 1967.

Falbel, Aaron. Letter to John Gatto, 17 February 1995. Unpublished correspondence.

Fitzgerald, Sally. *Flannery O'Connor: The Habit of Being*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1979.

Flax, Jane. "Responsibility without Grounds." In *Rethinking Knowledge: Reflections across the Disciplines*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995.

Gintis, Herbert. "Toward a Political Economy of Education: A Radical Critique of Ivan Illich's *DeSchooling Society*. *The Harvard Educational Review* 42, no. 1, February 1972: 70-96.

Goodfield, Jane. *An Imagined World*. New York: Harper and Row, 1981.

Gray, Francine Du Plessix. "The Rules of the Game." *New Yorker*, April 25, 1970: 40-56.

________. *Divine Disobedience: Profiles in Catholic Radicalism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970.

Greer, Colin. "All Schooled Up." In *After Deschooling What?*" New York: Harper, Row, 1973: 23-51.

Haldane, J. B. S. "On Being the Right Size." In*The World of Mathematics*, vol. 2. Ed. James R. Neuman. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956.

Held, Virginia. *Feminist Morality: Transforming Culture, Society, and Politics.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Hoinacki, Lee. "On Reading Ivan Illich." Unpublished article. Bremen, Germany, 20 January 1992.

Illich, Ivan. "Missionary Poverty, an Aspect of Intercultural Formation" Leaflet, Mexico: Center for Intercultural Documentation, 1962.

________. *Celebration of Awareness: A Call for Institutional Revolution.* Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 1970.

________. *Deschooling Society.* New York: Harper and Row, 1971.

________. *Tools for Conviviality.* New York: Harper and Row, 1973.

________. *Medical Nemesis.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1976.

________. *The Right to Useful Unemployment.* London and New York: Marion Boyars, 1978.

________. *Toward a History of Needs.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

________. *Shadow Work.* Salem, NH: Marion Boyers, 1981.

________. *Gender.* Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1982.

________. *H2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness.* Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1985.

________. "Hospitality and Pain." Unpublished essay, 1987.

________. "The Educational Enterprise in the Light of the Gospel." Unpublished essay, 1988.

________. "Part Moon, Part Traveling Salesman: Conversations with Ivan Illich." *Ideas.* CBC Radio, 1989.

________. "Dear Kelly." Unpublished essay, Philadelphia, 27 October 1990.

________. "Declaration on Soil." A joint statement drafted in Hebenshausen, Germany, 6 December 1990, in collaboration with Sigmar Groeneveld, Lee Hoinacki and other friends.

________. *In the Mirror of the Past: Lectures and Addresses 1978-1990.* New York and London: Marion Boyers, 1992.

________. "Lectio Divina." Speech presented at the University of Pennsylvania, 16 September 1992.

________. "An Address to Master Jacques." Speech given at Bordeaux, France, 13 November 1993.

________. *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994.

________. "Death Undefeated." *The British Medical Journal,* 23-30, December 1995.

________. "Philosophy...Artifacts...Friendship". Speech given to The American Catholic Philosophical Association. Los Angeles, CA, 23 March 1996.

________. "The Wisdom of Leopold Kohr." In *Papers on Proportionality.* University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996.

________. "Homo Educandus Lost." Speech delivered at Pennsylvania State University, 20 September 1997.

Illich, Ivan, and Barry Sanders. *ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind.* New York: Random House, 1989.

"Ivan Illich." *Current Biography.* New York: H.W. Wilson, 1969.

Jayakar, Pupul. *Krishnamurti: A Biography.* San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986.

Kohr, Leopold. *The Breakdown of Nations.* London: Routledge, 1986.

Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By.* New York: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Lindeman, Eduard. *The Meaning of Adult Education.* New York: New Republic, 1926.

Lynham, Susan. *Towards Effective Ethical and Enduring Leadership in a South African Era: Sustaining South African Organization through Major Changes and Challenges.* College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, MN, 1992.

Martin, Jane Roland. *Changing the Educational Landscape: Philosophy, Women, and Curriculum.* New York and London: Routledge, 1994.

McKnight, John. *The Careless Society: Community and Its Counterfeits.* New York: Basic Books, 1995.

Palmer, Parker. *To Know as We Are Known: A Spirituality of Education.* San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983.

Pegis, Anton. *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas.* New York: The Modern Library, 1945.

Pieper, Joseph. *The Silence of St. Thomas.* New York: Pantheon, 1957.

Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation.* New York: Octogon Books, 1944.

Rodriguiz, Richard. *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguiz* . New York: Bantam Books, 1982.

Schumacher, E. F. *Small is Beautiful..* London: Abacus, 1974.

Schrag, Peter. "Ivan Illich: The Christian as Rebel." *Saturday Review*, 19 July 1969: 14-19.

Solomon, Robert C., and Kathleen Higgins. *A Short History of Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996

Spretnak, Charlene. *The Resurgence of the Real: Body, Nature, and Place in a Hypermodern World*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1997.

Taylor, Jerome. *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1961.

Thompson, D'Arcy. *On Growth and Form*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1971.

Yuasa, Key. "The Center for Intercultural Formation in Cuernavaca: Creativity in the Definition of Goals, Flexibility in Program Structures of a Recently Established Study Center in Latin America." Cuernavaca, Mexico: Center for Intercultural Documentation, December 1967.